

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

July 30, 2023

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” This great question is asked by the Apostle Paul in our Epistle Lesson today. Some may ask, “Is God really for us?” The answer repeated from Genesis through Revelation over and over again is a resounding “YES! GOD IS FOR US!” Unfortunately, despite all that God has done for us in Christ, many are still against Him. A life of faith is one that trusts God’s promises from beginning to end. A life of faith is one that recognizes that God treasured us so much that he did not spare His own Son!

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 blessèd 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 105:2–6; antiphon 105:1

L Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name;
 make known his deeds among the peoples!

C Sing to him, sing praises to him;
 tell of all his wondrous works!

L Glory in his holy name;
 let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!

C Seek the Lord and his strength;
 seek his presence continually!

L Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
 his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,

C O offspring of Abraham, his servant,
 children of Jacob, his chosen ones!

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
 as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

L Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name;
 make known his deeds among the peoples!

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 everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love, that, receiving what You have promised, we may love what You have commanded; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C Amen.

Deuteronomy 7:6–9

⁶“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.

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

Gradual Romans 11:33, 36

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

Psalms 125

- L** ¹Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.
C ²As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people,
from this time forth and forevermore.

L ³For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous,
lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong.

C ⁴**Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts!**

L ⁵But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the LORD will lead away with evildoers!
Peace be upon Israel!

Romans 8:28–39

²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Verse Matthew 13:35b

L Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables; Alleluia.

C **Alleluia. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.**

Matthew 13:44–52

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 13th chapter.

C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

⁴⁴[Jesus said:] “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹“Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” ⁵²And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

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

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

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

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

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

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:

“There is an island in the North Atlantic where people have been looking for an incredible treasure for more than 200 years.” So begins each episode of *The Curse of Oak Island*, a television series on the History Channel that has been running for ten seasons. It involves two brothers from Michigan on a quest to find a treasure on an island in southern Nova Scotia, Canada.

I have to admit that this reality television series has captured my interest. There is something appealing about this band of adventurers on a quest to uncover a well-hidden secret treasure. I am not alone in this fascination with Oak Island. In fact, Franklin Roosevelt, the 32nd president of the United States is among the numerous people who have sought to unravel the enigma of this mysterious hidden treasure.

When Jesus spoke The Parable of the Hidden Treasure, it was with a complete understanding of human nature. He said, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” *The Curse of Oak Island* is simply a contemporary example of His insight into the heart and soul of humanity.

Preparing these thoughts became a bit of a treasure hunt for me as I dug through the Greek text of these few verses. The first nugget that I uncovered was the Greek word for treasure itself.

It may surprise you to know that the Greek word for treasure is *thesaurus* (Θησαυρός). Yes, that is the word we use for a book of synonyms. It literally means “treasury” or “a storehouse for precious things.” It is the place where goods and precious things are collected and laid up. A *thesaurus* is really a treasury or storehouse of synonyms.

Digging a little deeper, I discovered that this word is used 17 times in the New Testament. I read through each occurrence and uncovered a few more pearls.

If you thought long enough, you probably could recall the very first time this word is used. It’s at the beginning of Matthew in a story that is very familiar to you. Here it is in Matthew 2:11, “And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their **treasures**, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.”

Have you ever wondered why the Wise Men “opened their treasures?” It is because *thesaurus* means the place where precious things are stored. I loved making this discovery.

The second time this word is found in Matthew relates directly to our lesson for today. In Matthew 6:19-21, “Do not lay up for yourselves **treasures** on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves **treasures** in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your **treasure** is, there your heart will be also.”

Do you remember the Rich Young Man in Matthew 19:16-22? He came to Jesus and asked, “What good deed must I do to have eternal life?”

Jesus told him, “If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” The Rich Young man foolishly believed that he had kept all the commandments so he asked Jesus, “What do I still lack?” To convince him of his folly, Jesus said, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have **treasure** in heaven; and come, follow me.”

I wonder. Is there a treasure that would cause you to sell all in order to acquire it? Might it be a fine pearl or some other precious jewels?

Each of us has a certain amount of time and talent to spend on things that we value. We take up an occupation to provide for the things that we need or want. After providing the necessities of life, what are the things that your heart desires?

Some seek wealth. Others long for leisure. Some want power. Others are thrill-seekers. The list goes on and on.

Today is an opportunity to pause and consider our priorities. Is there anything of such great value that would cause you to sell all that you have? What is it that your heart desires the most?

Jesus tells us that for Christians, our top priority, our greatest treasure is His Kingdom. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

Why is God’s Kingdom so valuable? It supplies everything that our souls require. A shortlist includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. God’s Kingdom is ultimately fulfilled in the eternal happiness and bliss of paradise and the resurrection from the dead.

No matter how hard you try. No matter how rich you are. You cannot buy the treasure of God’s kingdom. You cannot earn your way to paradise. It is far too valuable.

But the treasure is not lost. Peter tells us, “You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

There is only one road that leads to God’s Kingdom. It is Jesus, himself, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He welcomes all who come to Him. He sacrificed Himself on the cross to give you this most valuable treasure for free without cost. Simply confess your sins and receive it from Him by faith!

The treasure of God’s kingdom is limitless. We may freely share it with everyone! When we are fully trained as Jesus’ disciples, we cannot help but bring out our treasure and offer it to the people around us.

Unfortunately, many choose another path. Jesus urges, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many,” (Matthew 7:14). Or as the hymn writer declares:

Many spend their lives in fretting
Over trifles and in getting
Things that have no solid ground.
I shall strive to win a treasure
That will bring me lasting pleasure
And that now is seldom found.

All Depends on Our Possessing, Lutheran Service Book 732, stanza 3

May we never forget what Jesus is teaching us today that His kingdom outweighs every human endeavor or treasure. It is more valuable than anything we could ever possess or own.

“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 4:6-7).

God’s richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Heavenly Father, You have redeemed us out of Your steadfast love. Grant that the Gospel may go forth unhindered and Your Spirit bring many into this fellowship of the redeemed.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, You have revealed to us the true treasure of Christ’s cross and resurrection. Grant that we may pursue Your kingdom with all our hearts, souls, minds and bodies.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, You justify us for the sake of Christ. Comfort any who are troubled by the memory of past sins or visited by the temptation to believe they cannot be forgiven. Give them confidence in Christ, that He died for them and still intercedes for them.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, You have given us various offices in our lives. Grant us faithfulness in these callings, that we may see them as gifts through which we serve You and our neighbors.

C Amen.

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

C Amen.

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

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

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

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

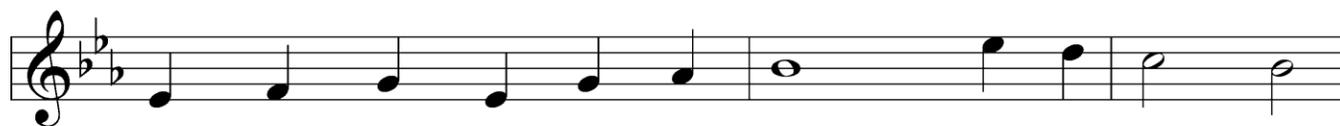
C Amen.

Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones

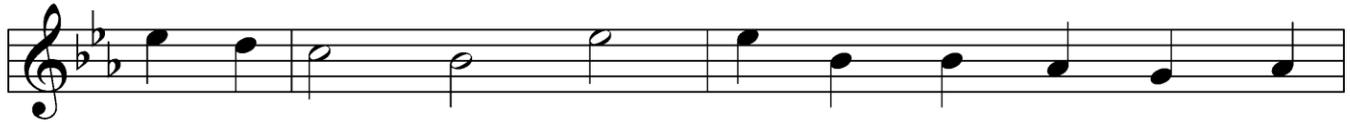
Lutheran Service Book 670, Lutheran Worship 308, The Lutheran Hymnal 475



1 Ye watch - ers and ye ho - ly ones, Bright
2 O high - er than the cher - u - bim, More
3 Re - spond, ye souls in end - less rest, Ye
4 O friends, in glad - ness let us sing, Su -



ser - apts, cher - u - bim, and thrones, Raise the glad strain:
glo - rious than the ser - a - phim, Lead their prais - es:
pa - tri - archs and proph - ets blest: "Al - le - lu - ia,
per - nal an - thems ech - o - ing: "Al - le - lu - ia,



“Al - le - lu - ia!” Cry out, do - min - ions, prince - doms,
 “Al - le - lu - ia!” Thou bear - er of the e - ter - nal
 al - le - lu - ia!” Ye ho - ly Twelve, ye mar - tyrs
 al - le - lu - ia!” To God the Fa - ther, God the



pow'rs, Vir - tues, arch - an - gels, an - gels'
 Word, Most gra - cious, mag - ni - fy the
 strong, All saints tri - um - phant, raise the
 Son, And God the Spir - it, Three in



choirs: “Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -
 Lord: “Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -
 song: “Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -
 One: “Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -



lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!”
 lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!”
 lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!”
 lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!”

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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 31 – August 5, 2023

Introduction

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

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you 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 Matthew 13:35b

- L** Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables; Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 105:2–6; antiphon 105:1

- L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples!
- C** Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wondrous works!
- L** Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!
- C** Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually!
- L** Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,
- C** O offspring of Abraham, his servant,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones!
- C** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
- L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples!

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 105 is an ode of praise that recalls God's grace to Abraham and his descendants by His miraculous delivery from slavery in Egypt through the Exodus. It calls upon His people to "Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered" (Psalm 105:5).

We, too, give thanks to the Lord when we remember His wondrous works and miracles. Without too much effort, each of us can recall God's divine hand touching our lives. Sometimes these miracles are immediately apparent as when He delivers us from an automobile accident or a deadly illness. Other times we recognize His wondrous works when we ponder the past and see how God has directed us through the twists and turns of life.

God's most wondrous work and His greatest miracle is delivering us from the bondage of sin and death. He sent us a Redeemer greater than Moses. He sent us His own dear Son who by His cross delivers us through the waters of baptism that works forgiveness of sins, rescues us from death and the devil, and gives us eternal salvation. He is shepherding us through the difficulties and wilderness of this life until we reach the Promised Land of life with Him forever in the eternal mansions of heaven.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, remembering the wondrous works that He has done, and His miracles in our lives.

L Let us pray. O Lord, as we call upon Your name, we remember Your awesome deeds of deliverance. Gant that we may live each day trusting You as we make known Your deeds among the peoples through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God world without end.

C Amen

Tuesday

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

Verse Matthew 13:35b

- L** Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables; Alleluia.
C Alleuia. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. 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. Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love, that, receiving what You have promised, we may love what You have commanded; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

From east to west and north to south, the daily headlines are distressing. Anger and rage are all around us. There seems to be so much hate and distrust in the world even among those who claim to be loving people. This all underscores the fact that in this life, we always need an increase in faith, hope, and love.

Without faith and hope, we are driven to despair. With faith and hope, we know that God is in control and that He will ultimately turn curses into blessings just as He did when He used the cross to bring forgiveness. With faith and hope, we can look past every crisis to peace and joy.

What does the world need? Love! Not romance or sensuality. We need love. Our current culture is clueless with it comes to love. It confuses love with self-gratification. Real love is the sacrificial giving of yourself. Real love is Jesus dying on the cross and saying, "Father, forgive them."

To learn about real love, take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 13, the great love chapter of the Bible. Follow that up with 1 John 4, where we read, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another," (1 John 4:10-11 NIV).

"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love," (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love, that, receiving what You have promised, we may love what You have commanded; 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 Matthew 13:35b

L Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables; Alleluia.

C Alleluia. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

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

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

Psalms 119:57-64

L ⁵⁷The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words.

C ⁵⁸I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.

L ⁵⁹When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies;

C ⁶⁰I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.

L ⁶¹Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.

C ⁶²At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your just and righteous decrees.

L ⁶³I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.

C ⁶⁴The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!

"Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion." Human fragility is a reality faced by all. No one is completely self-sufficient. No matter how strong and healthy, there is always some force or disease that can bring a person down.

Only the Lord can provide the safety and protection that we all crave. When we trust in the Lord, wickedness can never overcome us. By faith, we are surrounded by God's saving hand. He renews His love for us each day when we turn to Him for forgiveness.

Ultimate peace is ours in the Prince of Peace who came to save sinners, of whom I am foremost.

Prayer: O Lord, grant us the peace that passes all understanding. Let us see Your protecting presence in our lives each and every day. Amen.

Thursday

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

Verse Matthew 13:35b

- L** Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables; Alleluia.
G Alleluia. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

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.

Deuteronomy 7:6–9

⁶“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.

Do you recall spending time with an inquisitive youngster? You know the one. Every time you make a statement, this curious child asks, “Why?”

We never outgrow this curiosity. We may not always ask the question but we may think about it.

The Old Testament lesson for this week answers the question, “Why did God choose Israel for his treasured possession?” It is not because they were great in number. It was because God was keeping His promise!

You also may wonder, “Why did God choose me?” Unless I’m badly mistaken, you are not the brightest, strongest, fastest, most beautiful, most holy, or most caring person in the world. You are a sinner!

Yet God in His steadfast love has chosen you “before the foundation of the world” to be His in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). Why? The Living Bible puts it this way, “He did this because he wanted to!” (Ephesians 1:5 TLB). No other reason is necessary!

Because of His steadfast love, He has redeemed you from the house of slavery to sin and keeps His promises to you. In Christ, He grants you life and salvation!

Prayer: O Lord God, thank You for Your amazing grace that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind but now I see. Amen.

Friday

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

Verse Matthew 13:35b

L Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables; Alleluia.

C Alleluia. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

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

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

Romans 8:28–39

²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is one of the most amazing passages in Scripture. It declares that God makes all things work together for your good! This does not mean that everything that happens to you is good. There are sin and evil in the world. Yet God in His wisdom and power is able to turn evil to good, death to life. One of the most striking examples of this is Joseph in the Old Testament (Genesis 30-50). His father loved him. His brothers were jealous and wanted to kill him. They sold him into slavery. As a slave in Egypt, he rose to prominence in a wealthy household but was falsely accused and thrown into prison. Yet God was able to use all the bad things that happened to him to make him second-in-command of all of Egypt. Upon meeting his brothers again in Egypt, he is able to declare, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”

So also it is true for us. Often, we are able to look back upon life and see things that at the time seemed like curses, turn into blessings. Over and over again, God takes you through the twists and turns of life and makes them turn out for your good. The ultimate example of this is Jesus on the cross. Death turns to resurrection. We too, look to the day when all evil is behind us and death has turned to life with Christ for all eternity.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, that you have made us more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. Grant that we may live in faith knowing that nothing can ever separate us from Your love. Amen.

Saturday

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

C Amen.

Verse Matthew 13:35b

L Alleluia. I will open my mouth in parables; Alleluia.

C Alleuia. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Alleluia.

Gradual Romans 11:33, 36

L Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowl edge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

C For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen.

Kyrie

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

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

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

Paul writes in Romans 8:31, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”. How do we know that God is for us? We know God is for us because He did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all! For this reason, we know that God will give us everything we need for time and eternity.

Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword may all come our way but they cannot defeat us. Our victory is already won on the cross. This world’s prince may still Scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none. He’s judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.

Prayer:

The Word they still shall let remain
Nor any thanks have for it;
He’s by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child, and wife,
Though these all be gone,
Our vict’ry has been won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth.
Amen.

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