

The Seventh Sunday after Epiphany February 20, 2022

O Bless the Lord, My Soul Lutheran Service Book 814, Lutheran Worship 457, The Lutheran Hymnal 27



1 O bless the Lord, my soul! Let all with - in me join
2 O bless the Lord, my soul, Nor let His mer - cies lie
3 'Tis He for - gives thy sins; 'Tis He re - lieves thy pain;
4 He crowns thy life with love When ran - somed from the grave;



And aid my tongue to bless His name Whose fa - vors are di - vine.
For - got - ten in un - thank - ful - ness And with - out prais - es die!
'Tis He that heals thy sick - ness - es And makes thee young a - gain.
He that re - deemed my soul from hell Hath sov - 'reign pow'r to save.

5 He fills the poor with good;
He gives the suff'ers rest.
The Lord hath judgments for the proud
And justice for the oppressed.

6 His wondrous works and ways
He made by Moses known,
But sent the world His truth and grace
By His beloved Son.

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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 37:1–5; antiphon Psalm 37:7a, b

- L** Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way.
- C** **Fret not yourself because of evildoers;
be not envious of wrongdoers!**
- L** For they will soon fade like the grass
and wither like the green herb.
- C** **Trust in the Lord, and do good;
dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.**
- L** Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- C** **Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.**
- 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** Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way.

Kyrie

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

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

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

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: O God, the Strength of all who put their trust in You, mercifully grant that by Your power we may be defended against all adversity; 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 45:3–15

³Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

⁴So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because

you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.’ ¹²And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.” ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

L Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!

C For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

L Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;

C bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Psalm 103:1–13

L ¹Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

C ²**Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,**

L ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,

C ⁴**who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,**

L ⁵who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

C ⁶**The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.**

L ⁷He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

C ⁸**The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

L ⁹He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

C ¹⁰**He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.**

L ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

C ¹²**as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.**

L ¹³As a father shows compassion to his children,

C so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

1 Corinthians 15:21–26, 30–42

²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. . . . ³⁰Why am I in danger every hour? ³¹I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ³²What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” ³³Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” ³⁴Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

³⁵But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” ³⁶You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ³⁹For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

⁴²So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Luke 6:36

L Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.

Luke 6:27–38

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 6th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²⁷[Jesus said:] “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

³²“If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. ³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

³⁷“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

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.



1 O God, my faith - ful God, True foun-tain ev - er flow - ing,
2 Grant me the strength to do With read - y heart and will - ing
3 Keep me from say - ing words That lat - er need re - call - ing;
4 Lord, let me win my foes With kind - ly words and ac - tions,



With - out whom noth - ing is, All per - fect gifts be - stow - ing:
What - ev - er You com - mand, My call - ing here ful - fill - ing;
Guard me lest i - dle speech May from my lips be fall - ing;
And let me find good friends For coun - sel and cor - rec - tion.



Give me a health - y frame, And may I have with - in
That I do what I should While trust - ing You to bless
But when with - in my place I must and ought to speak,
Help me, as You have taught, To love both great and small



A con-science free from blame, A soul un - stained by sin.
The out - come for my good, For You must give suc - cess.
Then to my words give grace Lest I of - fend the weak.
And by Your Spir - it's might To live in peace with all.

5 Let me depart this life
Confiding in my Savior;
By grace receive my soul
That it may live forever;
And let my body have
A quiet resting place
Within a Christian grave;
And let it sleep in peace.

6 And on that final day
When all the dead are waking,
Stretch out Your mighty hand,
My deathly slumber breaking.
Then let me hear Your voice,
Redeem this earthly frame,
And bid me to rejoice
With those who love Your name.

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Devotional Thoughts:

Marriage brings with it many blessings. In addition, marriage often makes you a better person. This was brought to my attention recently by something I read online. I'm not sure if it was written by a man or a woman. There is much wisdom in it so it may have been written by a wife but after you hear it, I believe that you will agree with me that it was most likely written by a husband. Here it is: "Before I was married, I didn't know that there was a wrong way of putting milk into the fridge!"

This brought a smile to my face (not that I've ever been chided for improper milk storage). It highlights the fact that when a man leaves father and mother and clings to his wife, it is more than the joining together of a

man and a woman in marriage. It is the joining together of two families, two sets of values, and two traditions. In marriage, we hope to cling to the best routines of both families and to discard the rest. I am sure that all of us who have entered the estate of holy matrimony can recall the struggles of blending two sets of daily priorities.

I admit that there are more important things in life than how milk is placed in the refrigerator. As I grow older, it is interesting to learn what my children retain and which things they are willing to discard. Are there certain activities or practices that are important to you that you want to hand down to your children and your children's children? For many of us, besides brushing teeth and washing hands, it is important to pass on bedtime prayers, meal prayers, and weekly attendance at worship. I'm sure that you can add things to the list.

How about in the family of God? What are some important things to hand down from one generation to the next? Jesus gives us a list today. First on His list is, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."

Does this surprise you that we should love our enemies? It shouldn't. It is what Jesus is all about. It is what makes the Christian family unique in the world. Jesus explains this to us in verse 32, "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them." Love is not what makes the Christian faith unique. The world around us knows how to love. What makes the Christian faith unique is loving our enemies. That's what Jesus did!

Early in Holy Week, Jesus looked at the city that would soon crucify Him and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37). You may not have noticed this but Jesus' very first words from the cross were, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus didn't wait for us to become nice, friendly people before He loved us. The Apostle Paul explained it this way in Romans 5:6-11:

For while we were still weak, at the right time **Christ died for the ungodly**. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but **God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us**. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if **while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Is it any wonder then that Jesus instructs us to love our enemies? He teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Matthew 6:12 TYN - Tyndale Bible – updated English). Jesus loves and forgives His enemies. Can we do less?

Jesus went on to explain what it means to love your enemy. It means blessing those who curse you. It means turning the other cheek. It means giving your cloak and your tunic. It means giving to those who beg!

Loving your enemies means doing good to them and lending to them, expecting nothing in return. It means, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

So how are you doing on that? Not so well? I didn't think so. Neither am I.

In fact, if we could love the way Jesus loves, we wouldn't need a savior. His strict command to love our enemies underscores our need for a savior!

Jesus loved His enemies perfectly in a way that we cannot. His perfect love and righteousness became ours through faith in Him. Our sins became His on the cross. This is an amazing miracle. The Apostle John explains it with these words, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

By Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we have become part of the family of God. John writes, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him" (1 John 3:1).

In His family, we carry on as Jesus has taught us. Although we are still sinful, we love our enemies. When we fail, we remember the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's explanation of the Fifth and Seventh Petitions:

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, **for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment**. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us!

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

May God grant that to us all.

“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.

L O Lord, Your servant Joseph endured hardship and struggle, yet believed they would result to goodness and blessing. Give us such faith, and bring all things to a beneficial conclusion according to Your purpose in Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L Allow Your love to work in us, Lord. Lead us to love our enemies and serve those in need. Put an end to all bitterness and strife. Let forgiveness reign between us, just as You have removed our transgressions from us through faith in Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. We thank You for the protection granted to all who have attended to our needs during this pandemic. Thank You that are now experiencing an ease of restrictions. Continue to strengthen all those who serve us in the medical field. Give Your comfort and peace to all who are suffering from this illness or others. Be with those who mourn. Grant to them the hope and assurance of a blessed reunion in heaven.

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.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty Lutheran Service Book 790, Lutheran Worship 444, The Lutheran Hymnal 39



1 Praise to the Lord, the Al - might - y, the King of cre -
2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is won - drous - ly
3 Praise to the Lord, who has fear - ful - ly, won - drous - ly,
4 Praise to the Lord, who will pros - per your work and de -



a - tion! O my soul, praise Him, for He is your
reign - ing And, as on wings of an ea - gle, up -
made you, Health has be - stowed and, when heed - less - ly
fend you; Sure - ly His good - ness and mer - cy shall



health and sal - va - tion! Let all who hear Now to His
lift - ing, sus - tain - ing. Have you not seen All that is
fall - ing, has stayed you. What need or grief Ev - er has
dai - ly at - tend you. Pon - der a - new What the Al -



tem - ple draw near, Join - ing in glad ad - o - ra - tion!
need - ful has been Sent by His gra - cious or - dain - ing?
failed of re - lief? Wings of His mer - cy did shade you.
might - y can do As with His love He be - friends you.

5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
Let the Amen
Sound from His people again;
Gladly forever adore Him!

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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 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

February 21 – February 26, 2022

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 meditate 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: Luke 6:36

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 37:1–5; antiphon Psalm 37:7a, b

- L** Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way.
- C** Fret not yourself because of evildoers;
be not envious of wrongdoers!
- L** For they will soon fade like the grass
and wither like the green herb.
- C** Trust in the Lord, and do good;
dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.
- L** Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- C** Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.
- 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** Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way.

Kyrie

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

Do you like word games? One word game is sweeping the country right now. It's called Wordle. It was developed by a software engineer named Josh Wardle. (Notice his last name? ;-)

It became public in October and by late December it was an internet sensation. At the end of January, The New York Times purchased it for "an undisclosed price in the low seven figures." For now, you can still play it for free on the NYT website.

Wordle is a game that requires each player to guess a five-letter word. There is only one puzzle per day. Everyone who plays Wordle tries to guess the same word on the same day. Players then can share their results with family and friends on social media.

So how does Wordle relate to our introit for this week? If you like words and word games, you are not alone.

When you read Psalm 37 in the ESV, RSV, NIV, and some other translations, you will notice an interesting format. The verses are mostly grouped in pairs with a few exceptions. This is a way of indicating that these groupings are in alphabetical order according to the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 37 is known as an acrostic poem.

It seems that David loved words and language as much as we do. I can see him (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) sitting at his desk and carefully composing Psalm 37 so that it fits this pattern and choosing each word to say precisely what he intended.

What is it that David wanted to say that led him to work so hard on this psalm? It is revealed in the first two verses:

Fret not yourself because of evildoers;
be not envious of wrongdoers!
For they will soon fade like the grass
and wither like the green herb.

There will always be evildoers in the world. Every day our news reports are filled with them. However, they should not dominate our thinking! They will soon fade and wither away!

Instead, "Trust in the Lord," "Delight yourself in the Lord," "and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:2-7). Whenever you are troubled by evil in the world, read Psalm 37. You may wish to read all 40 verses today.

God is not responsible for evil but He has the solution for it. In the world, He brings it to an end through the activities of righteous rulers and authorities (Romans 13:1-4).

More importantly, He brings it to an end for all eternity through His only-begotten Son and His sacrifice on the cross. He brings evil to an end when He calls us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9-10). He did this when He made you His own by baptism through faith in Jesus. He ultimately brings evil to an end when calls you to Himself at your last hour.

Until then, you have a role in bringing evil to an end. Your role is to do good and befriend the faithfulness (Psalm 37:3). Fret not because of evildoers.

Let us pray: Lord God, our heavenly Father, thank You for delivering us from evil. Grant us faith to trust Your promise of salvation through faith in Jesus so that we will not fret because of evildoers through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday

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

Verse of the Day: Luke 6:36

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.

Kyrie

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

- L** Let us pray: O God, the Strength of all who put their trust in You, mercifully grant that by Your power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C Amen.

By now you may be picking up on one of the themes for this week. We live in a dangerous world where we need God's protection. Jesus says, "Love your enemies." There would be no need for Him to say this if we had no enemies.

One of the greatest disappointments for Christians is discovering that even in the church there are enemies of Christ and His people. Jesus dealt with hypocrites and so do we. In the world, we often recognize our enemies but in the church, they can stealthily sneak up on us.

But fret not. God defends you from all adversity and all adversaries. For a time, it may seem that they prosper and win. But in the end, they fade and wither like the grass.

Let us place our trust in God who is our Strength. He delivers and defends us. We remember God's words to the Apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

I do not know what today will bring. I do not know what evil or what enemies you will face. However, God will grant you His grace to survive all adversity. May we join with Paul in declaring, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Let us pray: O God, the Strength of all who put their trust in You, mercifully grant that by Your power we may be defended against all adversity; 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 6:36

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.

Psalm 103:1–13

- L** ¹Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
C ²**Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,**
L ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
C ⁴**who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,**
L ⁵who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
C ⁶**The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.**
L ⁷He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.
C ⁸**The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**
L ⁹He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.
C ¹⁰**He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.**
L ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
C ¹²**as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.**
L ¹³As a father shows compassion to his children,
C **so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.**

Kyrie

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

If you have been joining me in these daily meditations for a while, you know what a treasure the Psalms are for strengthening our faith and encouraging us for life in this world. Psalm 102 is a cry to God for relief in times of agony and distress. It is followed by Psalm 103 which is a joyful hymn of thanksgiving for God's redemption from the pit of despair and the renewed strength of youth like an eagle's.

Our God, who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, has forgiven all our iniquity! He has shown His compassion to us in Jesus! Nothing can renew us more than that.

Sometimes we struggle with regret and guilt for past offenses. It is hard for us to believe that God really grants complete and total forgiveness. Psalm 103 contains one of my favorite verses for dealing with such thoughts: "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (verse 12).

Why does God take your sins so far from you that "You can't get there from here."? The answer is found in verse 11, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him." This is why "He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities" (verse 10).

Our psalm for this week comprises only 13 of the 22 verses in Psalm 103. I think it would have been good to include verse 14: "For he knows our frame: he remembers that we are dust." God is fully aware of our weaknesses and failings. He knows that we will never be superheroes of righteousness. He loves and cares for us anyway! In Christ, He takes our sins away from us as far as the east is from the west!

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the relief from despair and suffering that we experience in life. Grant us faith to trust in the forgiveness that You give us in Jesus so that our sins are completely removed from us through the same 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 6:36

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. 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 45:3–15

³Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

⁴So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.’ ¹²And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.” ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

This snippet from the life of Joseph is an ideal Old Testament lesson chosen to accompany Jesus’ teaching in Luke 6:27-28, “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.”

Many of us are familiar with the life of Joseph. It is recorded in the last fourteen chapters of Genesis. However, let me give you a brief review.

Joseph was the youngest brother and a favorite of his father. His father, Jacob, gave Joseph “a robe of many colors.” This made his brothers so jealous that they plotted to kill him. In the end, they sold him to slave traders who took him to Egypt. The brothers then took Joseph’s blood-soaked robe of many colors and showed it to their father claiming that Joseph had been devoured by wild animals (Genesis 37).

In Egypt, Joseph became the slave of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard. Joseph did so well in his service to Potiphar that he became the overseer of Potiphar’s household.

Unfortunately for Joseph, Potiphar’s wife took a liking to him and tried to seduce him. Joseph resisted with this famous quotation, “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). Because Joseph rejected Potiphar’s wife’s enticement, she became angry and told her husband that Joseph had tried to seduce her! As a result, Potiphar had Joseph thrown into prison (Genesis 39).

While in prison, Joseph interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's personal servants (Genesis 40). Eventually, when the Pharaoh had a disturbing dream, on the recommendation of Pharaoh's cupbearer, Joseph was brought out of prison to interpret it for Pharaoh.

God gave Joseph the interpretation of the dream. He reported that there would be seven good years of harvest followed by seven years of famine. Joseph advised Pharaoh that during the first seven good years, surplus grain should be stored to feed the people during the seven years of famine. Joseph's suggestion pleased Pharaoh and Pharaoh placed him in charge of gathering and storing the food during the years of abundance (Genesis 41).

As the famine developed, Joseph's brothers learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt. They traveled to Egypt and met with Joseph to buy grain. Of course, they didn't recognize their brother who had grown and (by the grace of God) become second in command under the Pharaoh. Through a crafty plot, Joseph manipulated his brothers into bringing their youngest brother, Benjamin, to Egypt (Genesis 42-44).

This is where we find ourselves in our lesson for today. Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers. Remember that his brother wanted to kill him but sold him into slavery instead! In human terms, he had every right to exact revenge. But he didn't. Instead, he provided for them through the remaining years of famine and gave them a place to live.

His brothers had definitely been his enemies. They had hated him. They had abused him. But he loved them and cared for them! He personified Jesus' direction to love his enemies, to do good to those who hate him.

Much of what we do makes us enemies of Jesus and His cross. However, He has loved us with an everlasting love and made us part of His family. He gives us a place to live forever with Him in the eternal mansions of heaven.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the example of Joseph who loved his enemies. Grant us the faith to trust that even when our enemies harm us, You can turn it into something good that serves Your purpose through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 6:36

L Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. 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.

1 Corinthians 15:21–26, 30–42

²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. . . . ³⁰Why am I in danger every hour? ³¹I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ³²What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." ³³Do

not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”³⁴ Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

³⁵But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?”³⁶ You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.³⁷ And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.³⁹ For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another.⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

⁴²So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.

Everyone has a philosophy of life (whether they know it or not). The Apostle Paul’s philosophy of life was dominated by one thing: Jesus’ resurrection!

Paul encountered the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus (recorded in Acts 9:1-19 and Acts 22:3-16). This event changed everything. He dedicated the rest of his life to bringing the message of salvation through faith in the resurrected Jesus to as many people as possible. And as they say, the rest is history. God used Paul’s fervor, faithfulness, and writing to inform the Church and the Christian people through the centuries until this very day. Every one of us has been touched by Paul’s philosophy of life that Jesus and His resurrection are the most important things. Along with Paul, we share in Jesus’ resurrection and eternal life because we believe in Him. This changes everything for us.

Because of the resurrection, Paul was willing to endure hardships of every kind. For Him, it was worth it because He knew how important it was to get the message of the resurrection to people who were dying in sin and eternally lost. He knew that in the end, he would share in Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus was the firstfruits. The rest of the harvest would follow.

There are other philosophies. One that is popular today and has been for centuries is YOLO—You Only Live Once. Paul explained it more bluntly with these words, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

In this philosophy, every physical passion must be pursued before it is too late. This philosophy dominates our pop culture. It encourages the use of drugs and alcohol. It promotes sexual promiscuity and risk-taking. In a way, it encourages abortion and the taking of unborn life because nothing should be allowed to interfere with personal pleasure. In business, it glorifies greed. In politics, it turns J.F.K.’s words on their head. It declares, “Ask not what you can do for your country—ask what your country can do for you.”

It seems that this pleasure principle has found its way into our churches. There was a time when every Christian understood self-discipline and the importance of self-denial, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. Today, churches peddle retail religion. They model themselves on coffee houses and rock concerts. They know the draw of easy chair religion.

Paul would have none of it. He knew the danger of living life without understanding eternity. He was dismayed that despite his best efforts, the Corinthian Christians might be lost. He boldly admonished them with these shocking words, “Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame” (verse 34).

Dare I say that it is important for us to hear these words today? Have we been enticed by pop culture and its YOLO philosophy?

May God grant to us the eyes of faith to look beyond the here and now and see the bliss and joy of the resurrection that awaits all who put their trust in Jesus. May a small part of Paul’s passion for Jesus and the message of salvation be ours.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus that You have given to us. Grant that it would dominate our lives as it did St. Paul’s that we would put away sinning and find our lives in Him who gave His life for us through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

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

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

- L** Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!
C For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.
L Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
C bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Verse of the Day: Luke 6:36

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. 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. |

1 Corinthians 15 is overflowing in riches. It is a cornucopia of theology based on Jesus' resurrection from the dead. In all this abundance, it is easy to miss a little nugget in verse 33, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.'" Scholars tell us that Paul was quoting the Greek playwright Menander. Paul was illustrating what the unbelieving world knows to be true should be obvious to believers. Concerned parents have passed this wisdom on to their children through the years. Like much of our folk wisdom, it has been proven over and over again by those who choose to ignore it.

Young people get off track when they fall in with the wrong crowd at school. Gangs continue to be a menace in our cities. Although these are examples of youth who tend to be more susceptible to this kind of influence as they find their way into adulthood, we all should be on guard. Young and old, men and women are vulnerable to the dangers of bad company.

Paul uses this axiom to show the danger of allowing those who deny the resurrection to continue to corrupt the church in Corinth. They are permitting those who have no knowledge of God to damage their faith.

On a wider scale, it has become common to belittle anyone who believes that the truth of God's word and pure doctrine are important. I recently viewed a video produced by an influential evangelical preacher in which he proudly declared that anyone interested in pure doctrine would be driven from his church!

Denying the resurrection is a faith and salvation destroying doctrine. But corrupting the teaching of God's word on any level has the effect of weakening faith. This already plagued the Apostle Paul in New Testament times.

To counteract this trend of false teaching distorting the truth of God's word, Paul wrote about it on numerous other occasions. He wrote to the Ephesians, "No longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" (Ephesians 4:14). He wrote to the Romans, "I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them" (Romans 16:17). He told Timothy, "I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3). He told Titus, "As for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Paul was not alone in his insistence on pure doctrine. Jesus was clear in His message on this matter. He said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7).

Let us continue in our quest to clearly proclaim, “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” in truth and purity. In Him, we have the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the truth of Your word and bringing us to faith in Jesus who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Grant that we would be faithful in the proclamation of Your pure word and doctrine through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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