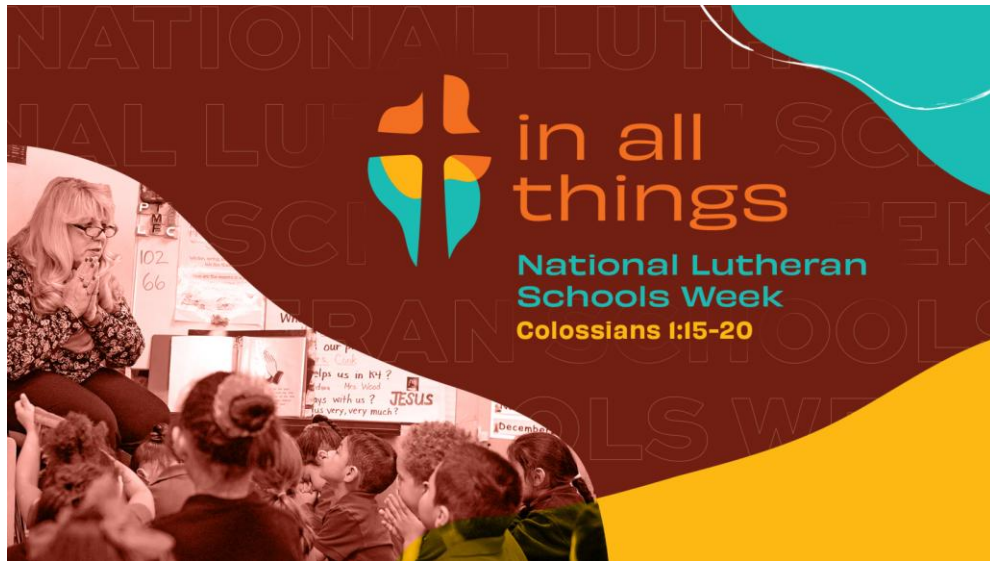


Home Worship Service for

The Third Sunday after Epiphany
January 23, 2022
National Lutheran Schools Week
January 23-29, 2022



Dear Friends in Christ,

It's here! National Lutheran Schools Week (NLSW) is the opportunity to celebrate with 1,885 schools nationwide and to give thanks for the gift of Lutheran schools to students, families and communities. Churches and schools rejoice in a partnership in and a shared vision for proclaiming God's grace and mercy to equip the next generation of faithful Christian servants. They give thanks to God for the opportunity to touch the lives of thousands and thousands of children who attend Lutheran early childhood centers, elementary schools and high schools.

The NLSW theme this year is "In All Things" and is inspired by Colossians 1:17–20: "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church ... [He reconciles] to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." This timeless theme empowers Lutheran schools to praise and share Christ in the sanctuary, classroom, STEM lab, choir room, playground, gym, athletic field, faculty lounge, office and every place where God's children and their leaders gather.

While "In All Things" is the theme and goal for this special week, its emphasis is appropriate for every day of the school year. In praise and thanksgiving to God, teachers and students strive to do their best, seeking to do all things well, and when they fall short they are blessed to be able to seek the grace of God for forgiveness and then rededicate their efforts individually, and as a school, to glorify God and serve His people. Teachers and students look forward to NLSW every year. In the mix of spirit days, special guests, service-learning experiences, open houses, community projects and the many other creative ways NLSW is celebrated, all can rejoice in the Gospel promise of eternal life, living in Christ's victory and proclaiming the Good News to one another and the world.

In His service and yours,
Dr. Rebecca Schmidt
Director, LCMS School Ministry
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

On this Third Sunday after the Epiphany of our Lord we remember that during His life on earth, Jesus was particularly interested in children. We must echo our Lord's concern and follow His mandate to raise our children in the Christian faith. Some of us have the privilege of sending our children to Christian schools. Others of us must fulfill this obligation in other ways. We pray that we all will take up this crucial task with enthusiasm and joy so that little lambs for who the savior died would be welcomed into His loving arms.

If you have children in your home, consider giving them a leadership role in this service.

Shepherd of Tender Youth Lutheran Service Book 864, Lutheran Worship 471, The Lutheran Hymnal 628



1 Shep - herd of ten - der youth, Guid - ing in
 2 You are the ho - ly Lord, O all - sub -
 3 You are the great High Priest; You have pre -
 4 O ev - er be our guide, Our shep - herd,



love and truth Through de - vious ways; Christ, our tri -
 du - ing Word, Heal - er of strife. Your - self You
 pared the feast Of ho - ly love; And in our
 and our pride, Our staff and song. Je - sus, O



um - phant king, We come Your name to sing
 did a - base That from sin's deep dis - grace
 mor - tal pain None calls on You in vain;
 Christ of God, By Your en - dur - ing Word



And here our chil - dren bring To join Your praise.
 You so might save our race And give us life.
 Our plea do not dis - dain; Help from a - bove.
 Lead us where You have trod; Make our faith strong.

5 So now, and till we die,
 Sound we Your praises high
 And joyful sing:
 Infants and all the throng,
 Who to the Church belong,
 Unite to swell the song
 To Christ, our king!

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 102:18–22; antiphon Psalm 102:13

L You will arise and have pity on Zion;
it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come.

C Let this be recorded for a generation to come,
so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord:

L that he looked down from his holy height;
from heaven the Lord looked at the earth,

C to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to set free those who were doomed to die,

L that they may declare in Zion the name of the Lord,
and in Jerusalem his praise,

C when peoples gather together,
and kingdoms, to worship the Lord.

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 will arise and have pity on Zion;
it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come.

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, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** Amen.

Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–10

¹All the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. ²So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. ³And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. . . .

⁵And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. ⁶And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. . . .

⁸They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

⁹And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. ¹⁰Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

- 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 19: 7–14

- L** ⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
- C** ⁸**the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;**

- L** ⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
the just decrees of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.
- C** ¹⁰**More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.**
- L** ¹¹Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
- C** ¹²**Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.**
- L** ¹³Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.
- C** ¹⁴**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.**

1 Corinthians 12:12–31a

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²²On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Verse of the Day: Luke 4:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Alleluia.

C **Alleluia, Alleluia, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. Alleluia.**

Luke 4:16–30

L The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 4th chapter.

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

¹⁶[Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²²And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” ²³And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.” ²⁴And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. ²⁵But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” ²⁸When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. ³⁰But passing through their midst, he went away.

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 Christ, our true and on - ly light, En - light - en
 2 Fill with the ra - diance of Your grace The souls now
 3 O gent - ly call those gone a - stray That they may
 4 Shine on the dark - ened and the cold; Re - call the
 5 That they with us may ev - er - more Such grace with



those who sit in night; Let those a - far now
 lost in er - ror's maze; En - light - en those whose
 find the sav - ing way! Let ev - 'ry con - science
 wan - d'ers to Your fold. U - nite all those who
 won - d'ring thanks a - dore And end - less praise to



hear Your voice And in Your fold with us re - joice.
 in - most minds Some dark de - lu - sion haunts and blinds.
 sore op - pressed In You find peace and heav'n - ly rest.
 walk a - part; Con - firm the weak and doubt - ing heart,
 You be giv'n By all Your Church in earth and heav'n.

Public domain

Devotional Thoughts:

My first encounter with students as a teacher happened about 50 years ago in a Vacation Bible School at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Bridgman, MI. I shudder to think about what the students had to tolerate.

In the fall of 1973, as a student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, I had my first experience with formal teaching. I served as what was known then as a field worker at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Barnhart, Mo about 25 miles south of the seminary. One night a week, I would travel to Barnhart and teach confirmation instruction to a hearing-impaired student who was a member of Immanuel.

As a vicar at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Moline, IL I began to feel comfortable in the teaching role. I taught 7th graders every Saturday morning for two hours. I taught a youth Bible class on Sunday morning and an adult Bible class during the week. However, the highlight of that year was sitting at the feet of a master teacher, Pastor Eldor Haake. As I recall, he taught one or two Bible classes every day of the week and it was my privilege to sit in and observe his superlative teaching of God's holy word. I witnessed how people were touched by God's love revealed in His word. Teaching the Bible has been a highlight of my ministry ever since.

For the last 32 years of my active ministry, I served at Christ Lutheran Church in Stevensville, MI. Christ Lutheran Church was founded with a Lutheran day school. In fact, Christ Lutheran School was the focal point and main purpose for its establishment. Christ Lutheran Church's first building was a school with classrooms and a gymnasium. It wasn't until about ten years later that Christ Lutheran built its present building that included a sanctuary for Sunday worship. Before that time, we worshiped in the school gym.

For 32 years, I taught 7th and 8th grade students daily in their religion class. For most of those years, I taught the New Testament to 7th graders. For 8th graders, I taught Luther's Small Catechism and doctrine. 7th and 8th graders can be a handful but I came to enjoy the hours spent with them.

All this comes to mind as we combine National Lutheran Schools Week with the reading of Luke 4:16–30. My experience in teaching 7th and 8th grade confirmation is that almost everything is new to them. They experience an epiphany almost every day as they learn more and more about Jesus and His love for them.

The people in the synagogue in Jerusalem experienced an epiphany as Jesus read to them from the book of the Prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Just like 7th and 8th graders, the people of Nazareth were ignorant of God's ultimate plan and purpose. Jesus was raised there. They knew His family but they didn't know God's heart and mind.

They marveled at His gracious words. The RSV says that they “wondered at the gracious words.” The Greek word for “marveled” or “wondered” can also be translated as “amazed” or “astonished.”

The people were absolutely astonished that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's plan to send a savior. More than that, they were amazed that God's plan wasn't to pour down judgment upon their gentile oppressors but to proclaim good news to the poor! Jesus' mission was to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor!

Some of the people in Nazareth could not bear to have their ignorance challenged. They rebelled against the truth of God's word so they sought to kill Jesus by throwing Him down a cliff!

In one sense, their reaction shouldn't be surprising. Sinful people do not like to hear the truth of God's word. They rebel against it.

In our world today, people still don't want to hear the truth of God's law and gospel. They want to believe that they can make up their own truth. It is common for people today to claim that their immorality is really morality and reject anyone who speaks God's truth to them.

This is why Christian education is more important than ever. In our secular society, people are more than happy to figuratively throw Jesus off the cliff. Parents are called upon to be more diligent than ever in raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Some parents have the privilege of sending their children to Christian schools where they daily learn of God and His love for them in Jesus. I count it a privilege to have been the pastor of a church that supports a Christian day school. I could witness God working in the lives of children and teachers every day. As Mr. Kern, one of our teachers, would often say, “HaaaaaMAZING!”

It is amazing that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world to save sinners. It's amazing that God gives us the privilege of teaching His word to students young and old. It is amazing that God allowed me for so many years to join with Jesus in proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor.

I pray that if you have children, you will have the opportunity to send them to a Lutheran school. If that option is not available to you, I pray that God will strengthen you in your task of raising your children in God's word of life. I pray that God will bless Lutheran schools with more and more students and that He will continue to provide them with faithful teachers.

Christian schools face untold obstacles today. For many years the greatest obstacle was financing our schools and the difficulty of competing with free government education. However, today they face the additional obstacle of surviving in a hostile secular society.

Pray for Lutheran schools. Pray that God will lead you to find ways to support their noble task of caring for little lambs for whom the Savior died.

“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 Heavenly Father, mercifully bless the Christian education of our children that they may grow in faith to the praise of Your holy name. Bless Lutheran schools wherever they may be and all other places where our children are brought closer to You. Encourage our congregations to support those who teach and those who learn. Give joy to all teachers, and give them the privilege of seeing the fruits of their labors; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

L Lord God, heavenly Father, Your Son gathered the little children to Himself that He might bless them. Strengthen parents that they may faithfully bring up their children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord by a life of prayer and devotion to You and Your Word. Bless the work of Sunday School teachers and all who assist parents in teaching the faith to children, that all might be led into the Savior's loving arms and grow to lead godly lives to the praise and honor of Christ's holy name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

L Lord God of Zion, we give You thanks that You have shown pity to our fallen world, setting us free from our sin and death. In Jesus, the appointed time of favor has come for all people. Cause Your name to be declared among all people, that Your grace may not be rejected in our time, but received with delight in every place.

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 the pandemic. As we witness this pandemic push our health care system to its limit, we ask for Your continued protection and grace to rest upon all who serve in the medical professions.

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.

Oh, Blest the House Lutheran Service Book 862, Lutheran Worship 467, The Lutheran Hymnal 625



1 Oh, blest the house, what - e'er be - fall, Where Je - sus
2 Oh, blest that house where faith is found And all in
3 Oh, blest the par - ents who give heed Un - to their
4 Oh, blest that house; it pros - pers well. In peace and
5 Then here will I and mine to - day A sol - emn



Christ is all in all! A home that is not whol - ly
hope and love a - bound; They trust their God and serve Him
chil - dren's fore - most need And wea - ry not of care or
joy the par - ents dwell, And in their chil - dren's lives is
prom - ise make and say: Though all the world for - sake His



His— How sad and poor and dark it is!
still And do in all His ho - ly will!
cost. May none to them and heav'n be lost!
shown How rich - ly God can bless His own.
Word, I and my house will serve the Lord!



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- Excelling at reading, writing and effective communication
- Training minds for success at the next academic level
- Creating a strong work ethic, critical thinking skills and the ability to relate well with others

1,885
Schools



21,222
Teachers



35
Districts

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with more than** **200,000** **students, their
families and the
community**

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- Being transformed by God's Word
- Clinging to the cross of Jesus

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THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
MISSOURI SYNOD
School Ministry

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 Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 24 –29, 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 4:18a

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 102:18–22; antiphon Psalm 102:13

- L** You will arise and have pity on Zion;
it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come.
- C** Let this be recorded for a generation to come,
so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord:
- L** that he looked down from his holy height;
from heaven the Lord looked at the earth,
- C** to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to set free those who were doomed to die,
- L** that they may declare in Zion the name of the Lord,
and in Jerusalem his praise,
- C** when peoples gather together,
and kingdoms, to worship the Lord.
- 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 will arise and have pity on Zion;
it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come.

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 experienced a time when everything was going wrong, when your life was miserable, and you felt lonely and in distress, you will relate to Psalm 102. Almost everyone has a time in life when they feel lower than low. The opening verses of Psalm 102 put this into words better than I ever could. But our introit picks up this psalm when God has intervened to turn things around.

We may not know why God allows times of distress to happen but we do know that at just the right time, God comes to our rescue. In His love, He has pity upon us.

Galatians 4:4-5 tells us, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

On that one Sabbath day, long ago in Nazareth, the appointed time came. Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the reading of those words by Jesus. It was time to bring good news to the poor.

If you are experiencing distress, pause and remember that God's love for you in Christ is real. He may chasten but He also heals. At just the right time, Jesus went to the cross to pay for our sins. At just the right time, Jesus rose from the dead.

At just the right time, we too must bear our crosses. At just the right time, God restores us to Himself. At just the right time, we will join before His throne in heaven and experience the fullness of His love and joy.

Let us pray: Lord God, our heavenly Father, we often experience distress in life. When these times come, grant us faith to trust Your promise to rescue us at just the right time through 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 4:18a

L	Alleluia, Alleluia, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Alleluia.
C	Alleluia, Alleluia, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. 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, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
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C	Amen.
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Part of Epiphany is the surprising news that Jesus came into the world not to be a powerful King that would destroy evil but rather He came to bring us His mercy.

If you are like me, there is not a week that goes by that you aren't praying for someone to be healed. As believers, we know that all healing comes from God. He grants healing through miracles and medicine.

We are blessed to live in a time when medical knowledge and skill are flourishing. I am living today because of this. However, God still uses miracles to heal. In my years of ministry, I have witnessed miraculous healing on several occasions. Each time, medical personnel had given up hope but God in His mercy intervened with a miracle to grant healing and life.

However, God doesn't promise physical healing here on earth. Physical death is the consequence of sin. However, God does promise physical healing in the resurrection of the dead. The Bible declares in Isaiah 53:5

But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

By Jesus' suffering and death, we are healed! Our souls are healed by the forgiveness Jesus won for us. His healing grants us eternal life through faith in Him.

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; 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 4:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. Alleluia.

Psalm 19: 7–14

L ⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
C ⁸**the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;**
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
L ⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
the just decrees of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.
C ¹⁰**More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;**
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.
L ¹¹Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
C ¹²**Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.**
L ¹³Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.
C ¹⁴**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,**
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

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.

You may have detected twin themes for this week. One is God's care and love for the poor and oppressed. The other theme is the ultimate truth of God's word. Our psalm for this week includes both of these.

Psalm 19:7 begins, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;" It is hard to miss the fact that many people in our world are searching for ways to revive their souls. This is not surprising because we live in a time of heightened anxiety and stress.

They will often seek relief by secular means. I won't catalog them for you but everyone comes up short. They are either fraudulent in their claims or they only offer temporary relief for our souls.

God's word is the only real way to revive your soul. It begins with an honest diagnosis of the problem. Each one of us is sinful. We have disregarded and disobeyed God's law. Sin crushes the soul.

But "the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7b). God's word makes us wise unto salvation (Thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.—2 Timothy 3:15 KJV).

To the secular world, this seems like foolishness but not for us. St. Paul writes, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

When God reveals to us the abundance of His grace and mercy through His Son, we know that they are more to be desired than gold. They are sweeter than honey dripping from the comb (Psalm 19:10). This revives the soul more than anything the secular world can offer.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for reviving my soul with the Gospel. Grant me faith to live each day under Your grace and mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Addendum: It's hard for me to skip Psalm 19:12-13. These are well-known and often quoted verses from this Psalm. Martin Luther referenced Psalm 19:12, "Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults" as proof that no one could enumerate every sin in private confession. Some sins are unknown and hidden even from our own eyes and knowledge.

I have witnessed this in my life and in the lives of others. Sometimes ignorance of God's word makes us unaware of sinful words and actions.

I once knew a man whose language was distressful in his use of profane and vulgar language. While I never challenged him on his vocabulary, he changed his speech patterns after learning more about the second commandment.

I am convinced that this is repeated over and over in the lives of Christians who are simply ignorant of God's law. They aren't necessarily sinning willfully but rather out of ignorance. And so we pray, "Forgive my secret sins.

This leads us to Psalm 19:13, "Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression." The NIV says, "Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me."

These sins are much more dangerous than our sins of ignorance. Sin has so infected every one of us that despite our knowledge, we are tempted to sin willfully. This kind of sinning can destroy faith. When we consciously and deliberately reject God's commandments, we are in danger of losing salvation. For this reason, the psalmist prays, "Keep your servant also from willful sins."

Thursday

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

Verse of the Day: Luke 4:18a

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. 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.

Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–10

¹All the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. ²So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. ³And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. . . .

⁵And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. ⁶And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. . . .

⁸They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

⁹And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. ¹⁰Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

In the past, Ezra and Nehemiah were sometimes combined into one book. They pick up where 2 Chronicles ends. Ezra was a scribe and a priest. Nehemiah was governor of Judea under Persian rule.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the return of the exiles from Babylon at the direction of Cyrus king of Persia. They recount the rebuilding of the altar, the temple, Jerusalem, and its walls. Worship of the true God was reestablished.

In our Old Testament lesson, the people gather and ask Ezra to read God’s word to them. How different times have become. Before the exile, people refused to hear the word of the prophets. Now, they ask to hear God’s law.

Next, an amazing thing happens. Nehemiah 8:3 reports, “The ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.” As someone who has publicly read scripture and preached from a pulpit, I am well aware of how inattentive some people can be!

The reading of God’s word moved the people to worship and declare, “Amen, Amen” when Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. But all was not well. The people also became painfully aware of their sins and failure to follow God’s command. This so penetrated their hearts that they mourned and wept.

But all was not lost. With God's word of command came also His word of promise. Nehemiah said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

The joy of the Lord is Your strength! This strength comes from knowing God is a God of forgiveness and salvation! All is not lost! Jesus ends the Beatitudes with these words, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven!" (Matthew 5:12).

Let all of our feastings remind us of the joy of salvation. As we live in the day of grace, we declare, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24 KJV).

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for Your holy word. Grant that we would be attentive to it in our reading and hearing. Give us the strength that comes from knowing the joy of our salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PS. Pardon this old joke. Who is the shortest person in the Bible? Some say, Knee-high Miah (Nehemiah) but it turns out to be Bildad the Shoe-height (Bildad the Shuhite—Job 2:11).

Friday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 4:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. 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 12:12–31a

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and

various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

It is difficult for me to consider only these words from 1 Corinthians 12 without recognizing that 1 Corinthians 12-14 form one unit of thought. But I will save that for another day.

Did you notice the theme? We (the Church) are the body of Christ! We are not the “bodies” of Christ. We are “the one holy Christian and apostolic Church” (Third article of the Nicene Creed). There is one Baptism for the remission of sins! The Apostle Paul writes:

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:4-6).

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

We live during a greatly divided time in our country. Many people seek to enhance their personal power or prestige by increasing a sense of tribalism among us. They profit by pitting one group against another. They play on envy and jealousy.

None of this is surprising! It is the natural consequence of sin. It was evident already in Cain and Abel.

Unfortunately, from the earliest times, it was also evident in the Church! Paul had to repeat his reprimands against division among Christians over and over.

We are not all the same, just as a hand and a foot are different. But we are all one! We love and forgive each other. We cling to the truth of God’s word. We forgive as we are forgiven.

In love, we do not rejoice at wrongdoing, but we rejoice with the truth. In love, we bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things (1 Corinthians 13:6-7).

We are all one in Christ! “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24).

Prayer: O Lord, Almighty God, thank You for the gift of unity in Your Church. Grant that we would recognize that unity in the things we say and do without compromising the truth of Your word through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

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

G Amen.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

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

G 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;

G bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Verse of the Day: Luke 4:18a

L Alleluia, Alleluia, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Alleluia.

G Alleluia, Alleluia, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. 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.

Luke 4:16–21

¹⁶[Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

This is an absolutely appropriate reading for the Epiphany season! The people had been looking for the Christ and waiting expectantly for Him. He was there right with them for His entire life but they couldn’t recognize Him as the Messiah until that day in the synagogue.

There are many passages of Scripture that Jesus could have used to reveal Himself as the Savior. But on this day the appointed reading was this portion of Isaiah. It didn’t happen by accident but God (as He so often does) arranged things so it would be read the day that Jesus was there.

At His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in fulfillment of these verses. Jesus was chosen for the special mission of proclaiming the Gospel (good news) to the poor! In His Sermon on the Mount, He declared, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3).

You and I are the poor in spirit. We claim no righteousness of our own! We are captive to sin and corruption. But Jesus has come to set us free from sin, death, and the devil. He did this on the cross.

Our eyes were once blind to the truth of God’s word, the seriousness of sin, and the sweet message of the Gospel. But now, by the Spirit, Jesus has opened our eyes. We now clearly see our need for a savior and Jesus our Savior who has come to bring us liberty.

We now live in the time of the Lord’s favor.

He blesses us and keeps us.

He makes His face shine on us and is gracious to us.

He looks upon us with favor and gives us peace!

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for opening our eyes to see Jesus our Savior. Grant us grace to continue His work of proclaiming the Gospel to the poor in Spirit through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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