

The Third Sunday in Lent March 20, 2022

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

Lutheran Service Book 427, Lutheran Worship 101, The Lutheran Hymnal 354



1 In the cross of Christ I glo - ry, Tow'r - ing
2 When the woes of life o'er - take me, Hopes de -
3 When the sun of bliss is beam - ing Light and
4 Bane and bless - ing, pain and plea - sure By the

o'er the wrecks of time. All the light of sa - cred
ceive, and fears an - noy, Nev - er shall the cross for -
love up - on my way, From the cross the ra - diance
cross are sanc - ti - fied; Peace is there that knows no

sto - ry Gath - ers round its head sub - lime.
sake me; Lo, it glows with peace and joy.
stream - ing Adds more lus - ter to the day.
mea - sure, Joys that through all time a - bide.

Public domain

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 5:4–8; antiphon Psalm 1:6

- L** For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.
- C** **For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil may not dwell with you.**
- L** The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.
- C** **You destroy those who speak lies;
the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.**
- L** But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.
- C** **Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.**
- 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** For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

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 whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from
Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the
unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with
You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

Ezekiel 33:7–20

⁷“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my
mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and
you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his

blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

¹⁰“And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’ ¹¹Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

¹²“And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. ¹³Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. ¹⁴Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, ¹⁵if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.

¹⁷“Yet your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just,’ when it is their own way that is not just. ¹⁸When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. ¹⁹And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by them. ²⁰Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Hebrews 12:2

L O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,

C the founder and perfecter of our faith,

L who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

C and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Psalms 85

L ¹LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

C ²You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin.

L ³You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.

C ⁴Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!

L ⁵Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

C ⁶Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?

L ⁷Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.

C ⁸Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.

L ⁹Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

C ¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

L ¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.

C ¹²Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

L ¹³Righteousness will go before him

C and make his footsteps a way.

1 Corinthians 10:1–13

¹I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the

same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." ⁸We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹²Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: 2 Peter 3:9b, c

L The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish,

C but that all should reach repentance.

Luke 13:1–9

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

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹There were some present at that very time who told [Jesus] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

⁶And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' ⁸And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

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.

Jesus Sinners Doth Receive

Lutheran Service Book 609, Lutheran Worship 229, The Lutheran Hymnal 324



1 Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive; Oh, may all this
 2 We de - serve but grief and shame, Yet His words, rich
 3 Sheep that from the fold did stray No true shep - herd
 4 I, a sin - ner, come to Thee With a pen - i -



say - ing pon - der Who in sin's de - lu - sions live
 grace re - veal - ing, Par - don, peace, and life pro - claim;
 e'er for - sak - eth; Wea - ry souls that lost their way
 tent con - fes - sion. Sav - ior, mer - cy show to me;



And from God and heav - en wan - der! Here is hope for
 Here our ills have per - fect heal - ing. Firm - ly in these
 Christ, the Shep - herd, gent - ly tak - eth In His arms that
 Grant for all my sins re - mis - sion. Let these words my



all who grieve: Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive.
 words be - lieve: Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive.
 they may live: Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive.
 soul re - lieve: Je - sus sin - ners doth re - ceive.

5 Oh, how blest it is to know:
 Were as scarlet my transgression,
 It shall be as white as snow
 By Thy blood and bitter passion;
 For these words I now believe:
 Jesus sinners doth receive.

6 Now my conscience is at peace;
 From the Law I stand acquitted.
 Christ hath purchased my release
 And my ev'ry sin remitted.
 Naught remains my soul to grieve:
 Jesus sinners doth receive.

7 Jesus sinners doth receive;
 Also I have been forgiven;
 And when I this earth must leave,
 I shall find an open heaven.
 Dying, still to Him I cleave:
 Jesus sinners doth receive.

Devotional Thoughts:

Attending seminary was the fulfillment of an eight-year quest through high school and college. I can remember being in awe of the Gothic buildings of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. My first few days in class were particularly intimidating as I sat at the feet of some of the most revered professors. A few of them were aware of their status as icons and cultivated it to their advantage.

One such professor mentioned an upcoming test and concluded his remarks with *Verbum sapienti*. This boosted his intimidation factor for me. I certainly didn't know what he meant.

There was a time in the early twentieth century when some instruction at the seminary was in Latin but those days were gone. Nevertheless, several professors believed that classically educated college graduates should be familiar with common Latin expressions. Although I had Latin in high school and college, *Verbum sapienti* was new to me. After a bit of inquiry, I discovered that *Verbum sapienti* means "a word to the wise" which wasn't much help.

The complete expression is *verbum sapienti sat est*. It means "a word to the wise is sufficient." It was first used by a Roman playwright named Plautus in about 200 B.C. It means "a wise or intelligent person can take a hint and does not need a long explanation." Hence, my beloved professor was warning us to study carefully for our upcoming exam. As I pondered our Gospel lesson for today, this little expression jumped back into my mind.

We are not sure why, but people chose this time to tell Jesus about Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Since Jesus was from Galilee, they probably believed that He would be interested in the news.

Aside from this report in the Gospel of Luke, we have no more information about this incident. It seems that Pilate chose to kill these Galileans while they were offering their sacrifices! Martin Franzmann tells us that this fits "with known instances of his brutal disregard for the religious feelings of the people whom he governed."¹

The ancient Jewish historian Josephus recorded an incident when Pilate ordered his soldiers to dress like private citizens and conceal themselves in the crowd. The Jews were protesting the fact that Pilate had used sacred temple funds to finance a water project. When they received a signal, the soldiers started beating the protestors so badly that many of them died. So the fact that he also killed Galileans while they were sacrificing is not a surprise at all.

Many people in those days, as today, believed that when something bad happened, it was a punishment from God. They concluded that the Galileans must have deserved what they got. Jesus would have none of it. He asked, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?" Then He answered His own question this way, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

There had also been a construction accident in which eighteen people were killed when a tower collapsed. About this, Jesus asked, "Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?" He then answered this question in the same way, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

A few decades ago, a rabbi named Harold Kushner authored a book titled, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. It was a New York Times bestseller and he was on all of the talk shows. He made his fame playing on the notion that bad things are supposed to happen to bad people and good things are supposed to happen to good people. In eastern religions and American pop culture, this is known as karma. In our lesson for today, Jesus puts that idea to rest.

The false belief held by people in Jesus' day as well as our own is that the Galileans were being punished by God for some particularly horrible sin. But no, those people were not worse sinners. They were just regular sinners!

The false belief is that some people are good and deserve good things and some people are bad and deserve bad things. However, Jesus understood what the Bible clearly teaches. "All have sinned and fall short of the

¹Walter H. Roehrs and Martin H Franzmann, joint author, *Concordia Self-Study Comentary*, electronic ed., 72 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1998, c1979).

glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Some people may seem to come closer than others, but no one can live a holy life. They all fall short!

Imagine a competition to build a bridge across a 100-foot river. One particularly bad engineer builds a bridge 25 feet long. Another builds a bridge 50 feet long. A third builds a bridge 99 feet long.

In a certain sense, the 99-foot bridge is better than the 25-foot bridge. But it still falls into the river! None of them is good enough!

When it comes to goodness, no one is good enough. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us the standard of goodness required by God. He says, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). If you want good things to happen to you, if you want to escape God’s wrath and judgment, simply be perfect!

You see the problem here. We have a tendency is to compare ourselves with others. We love counting ourselves among the good and righteous people. Almost everyone can find someone who appears to be a worse sinner. But this is a dangerous game.

If I fail to recognize that I am a poor miserable sinner, then I will also fail to recognize my need for a savior! That was the problem of the Pharisees. They thought of themselves as “good people.” They were offended by the tax collectors and sinners who flocked to Jesus. They were offended when Jesus called out their hypocrisy!

So what are we to do to avoid someone dropping a house on us? None of us is good enough. None of us lives up to God’s standard of perfection. But there is someone who was perfect. It is Jesus who was perfect for us!

By faith, His righteousness and perfection become ours. On the cross, His sacrifice takes away the sin of the world. Romans 3:23 tells us “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” But we must continue to verse 24 which says that we “are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” So even the thief on the cross can hear Jesus say, “Today you will be with me in paradise!”

Lent is a time of repentance. It is a time for us to stop thinking that we are good enough and that God owes us blessings and salvation. Lent is a time to recognize our sin and kneel at the cross and hear Jesus say, “Father, forgive them.”

When Jesus heard of the Galileans murdered by Pilate, He could have simply said, “*Verbum sapienti* – a word to the wise is sufficient.” When we witness the effects of sin in the world, we should take the hint. But He spelled it out so that there would be no doubt. He said, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

When we witness natural or manmade disasters, may they move us to turn to God for salvation. May the Holy Spirit work repentance in our hearts and turn us to Jesus. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

“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 Almighty God, You order and number our days according to Your wisdom. Give us repentant hearts, lest we perish with this world of violence and suffering, that we would hold fast to Christ for life and salvation. Amen.

C Amen.

L Gracious Lord, You take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desire that they would turn and live. Give Your people courage to warn of sin and death and strength to defend Your message. Turn sinners to life by the proclamation of Christ, who delivers from all unrighteousness. Amen.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, guard Your people against immorality. Grant that our homes would be places of godly instruction and living. Fill our marriages with fidelity and love. Bless those who are single joy and contentment.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, govern the kingdoms of this world according to Your holy and gracious will. Protect those in harm's way because of the war in Ukraine, especially the innocent men, women, and children. Curb what is evil and promote what is good among us wherever we live in this fallen world.

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 a decline in the number of new infections and 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.

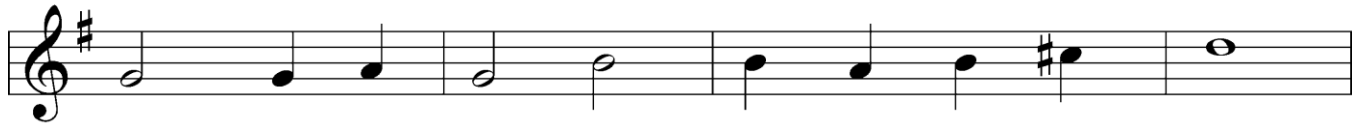
C Amen.

Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise

Lutheran Service Book 917, Lutheran Worship 221, The Lutheran Hymnal 47



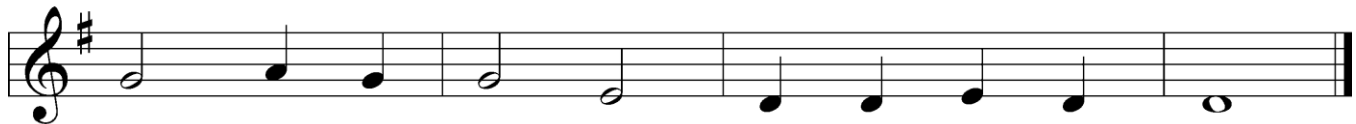
1 Sav - ior, a - gain to Thy dear name we raise
2 Grant us Thy peace up - on our home - ward way;
3 Grant us Thy peace, Lord, through the com - ing night;
4 Grant us Thy peace through - out our earth - ly life,



With one ac - cord our part - ing hymn of praise;
With Thee be - gan, with Thee shall end, the day.
Turn Thou for us its dark - ness in - to light.
Our balm in sor - row and our stay in strife;



Once more we bless Thee ere our wor - ship cease,
Guard Thou the lips from sin, the hearts from shame,
From harm and dan - ger keep Thy chil - dren free;
Then, when Thy voice shall bid our con - flict cease,



Then, low - ly bend - ing, wait Thy word of peace.
That in this house have called up - on Thy name.
For dark and light are both a - like to Thee.
Call us, O Lord, to Thine e - ter - nal peace.

Public domain

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.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Some liturgical portions are adapted from Lutheran Service Book © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. Lutheran Service Book License: 10002731 Christ Lutheran Church, Stevensville, Michigan

Hymns are in the public domain. The remainder of this work including adaptations and the Devotional Thoughts © 2022 Philip G. Quardokus. All rights reserved.

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 in Lent

March 21 – March 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: 2 Peter 3:9b, c

- L** The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish,
- C** but that all should reach repentance.

Introit Psalm 5:4–8; antiphon Psalm 1:6

- L** For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.
- C** For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil may not dwell with you.
- L** The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.
- C** You destroy those who speak lies;
the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.
- L** But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.
- C** Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.
- 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** For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Kyrie

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

The introit and the other propers for this week contain harsh warnings for the wicked. One of Satan's most dangerous lies is convincing people that there are no negative consequences connected with sin and evil.

The world is filled with people who are proud of their cleverness. They believe that they can outsmart God. This is true of white-collar fraud as well as street crime. You may have met people like that. They have convinced themselves that living a good and righteous life is the height of foolishness. Many of them would like to convince you of the same.

However, there is always a consequence to sin. David tells us in Psalm 5 that God is not a God who delights in wickedness! Evil may not dwell with Him.

God in His patience may allow sinful people time to repent. However, in the end, He will not tolerate evil.

Fortunately for us, God sent Jesus to overcome evil. We are called to repentance which means turning from our evil ways and receiving the forgiveness that Jesus won for us on the cross.

May we never be counted among those who turn their backs on God and His righteousness. If we should ever do that, may He call us back to repentance.

Prayer: O Lord, You are a God who does not delight in evil. Guide us in righteousness all the days of our lives. When we stumble grant us repentance and forgiveness 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: 2 Peter 3:9b, c

L	The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish,
C	but that all should reach repentance.

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 whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Sometimes I'm surprised by the ignorance of the irreligious. One often-repeated slur upon God and His people by these folks is, "I can't believe in a god who enjoys punishing people." No one who seriously studies the Bible would ever make such a comment. In the Old Testament lesson for this week, God couldn't have stated it more clearly than this, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11). His desire is "that the wicked turn from his way and live."

Our collect reminds us that God is always ready to have mercy on those who return to Him. “The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Psalm 145:8).

Justice demands that wrongdoing should receive its due reward. However, God in His love sent Jesus to endure our punishment for us. Those who reject Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross are rejecting God’s mercy and pardon.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). May we return to the Lord and embrace the forgiveness of sins won for us by our savior.

Let us pray: O God whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; 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: 2 Peter 3:9b, c

L The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish,

C but that all should reach repentance.

Psalms 85

L ¹LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

C ²**You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin.**

L ³You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.

C ⁴**Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!**

L ⁵Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

C ⁶**Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?**

L ⁷Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.

C ⁸**Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.**

L ⁹Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

C ¹⁰**Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.**

L ¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.

C ¹²**Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.**

L ¹³Righteousness will go before him

C and make his footsteps a 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.

When you read Psalm 85, the word “again” may have caught your attention. Times were difficult and the psalmist asked God to “Restore us again” and “Will you not revive us again?”

In the past, God was favorable to them and restored them. He forgave them and covered their sins. Psalm 85 is a plea for God to do this once more.

Have you ever been in a situation where you prayed something like this, “God if you get me out of this, I’ll never do it again?” God answered your prayer and saved you. However, after a while, your promise was forgotten and you again found yourself in a similar mess. When this happens, it is time to pray Psalm 85.

A pastor I once knew was fond of pointing out how fickle we are as people. We make commitments that we can’t or won’t keep. We say one thing and do another. One day we praise God and the next day we criticize Him.

But God is always faithful. He is filled with steadfast love and faithfulness. He will never turn us away when we come to Him with repentance in our hearts. He is always there to restore us and revive us again!

In God’s eyes, you will never find yourself in an irredeemable situation. He will always welcome home the Prodigal Son. He will always search for the lost sheep. He will always bind up the broken-hearted. He will restore and revive us again.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for hearing and answering our prayers even when we have been unfaithful. Restore us and revive us with Your holy word and the forgiveness that Jesus won for us on the cross. Let us never doubt Your willingness to welcome us home into Your family through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

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

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: 2 Peter 3:9b, c

L The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish,

C but that all should reach repentance.

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.

Ezekiel 33:7–20

⁷“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

¹⁰“And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’ ¹¹Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

¹²“And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. ¹³Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. ¹⁴Again, though I say to the

wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, ¹⁵if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.

¹⁷“Yet your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just,’ when it is their own way that is not just. ¹⁸When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. ¹⁹And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by them. ²⁰Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways.”

If it wasn’t so tragic, it would be interesting to sit back and watch the morality struggle happening in our country at this time. People who are promoting a “new morality” are so totally convinced that they are right, it is almost comical.

An outside observer might ask them all the same questions that religious skeptics have asked Christians for centuries. Yet they seem blissfully unaware that their pious devotion is built on sinking sand. Their passionate fervor has no foundation in absolute truth. In fact, their arguments are based on rejecting absolute truth.

Our Old Testament lesson for this week is a reminder that the more things change, the more things stay the same. The people in Ezekiel’s day refused to turn from their wickedness and do what is just and right because they said, “The way of the Lord is not just.”

This is the same thing we are hearing today. Proponents of the “new morality” declare, “The way of the Lord is not just.” They want us to believe that their human wisdom and insight are far superior to the Lord’s.

Fortunately for us, God has given us His holy word. We know right and wrong because God has revealed it to us in the Scriptures. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we know that God’s ways are just.

Each one of us has stumbled in our quest to do what is right. But our God is a God of forgiveness and grace. I am so thankful for that. He is different from those promoting the “new morality.” Almost every day we see examples of their intolerance and unwillingness to understand or forgive any variation from their rigid moral and political agendas.

Thanks be to God who is merciful and tenderhearted. He welcomes back the sinner and forgives our transgressions. May we always be as gracious to others as God is to us.

Let us pray: O Lord God, You called Ezekiel to faithfully speak Your word. He was charged with calling wicked people to turn from their wicked ways and live. Grant that when wickedness takes hold of us that we would turn from our wicked ways and live. Move us to always trust that the way of the Lord is just. Give us the courage to speak the truth of Your word and give us compassionate hearts to welcome back sinners through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Friday The Annunciation of our Lord

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

Verse of the Day: 2 Peter 3:9b, c

- L** The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish,
C but that all should reach repentance.

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 1:26–38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Today is March 25, The Annunciation of our Lord. It is not quite as famous as December 25 but the two are unquestionably linked. The Annunciation is the celebration of the day when the angel Gabriel came to Mary in Nazareth. He announced to her, "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." Nine months later, Jesus was born. As you have guessed, December 25 is exactly nine months from today.

This year and next year are special years to think about these two dates. Let me explain.

How did December 25 become Christmas? The exact answer is lost to history. Most of the explanations that are in popular circulation are flawed.

First, December 25 was not chosen to replace a pagan Roman holiday. We know this because December 25 was celebrated as Christmas before Christianity was legalized. This group of early Christians sought to distance themselves as far as possible from anything associated with the pagan religion of Rome.

Second, you may have heard that shepherds would not be out in their fields at night in December because it's the rainy season. Dr. Paul Maier tells us that this assumption is false. Near Bethlehem, shepherds raised special flocks for sacrifice in the temple and were in their fields all year-round with their sheep. In fact, you can visit fields near Bethlehem with caves that were converted into family dwellings. It would not have been difficult or uncomfortable for shepherds to stay there at night in December.

Nevertheless, we do not know if Jesus was born in December or not but let me suggest how December 25 may have been chosen for Jesus' birthday. It has to do with the selection of the date for the Annunciation.

We don't know this date either but Luke gives us a clue. He says that it happened in the sixth month. So what would early Christians believe that this meant? It could mean in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy as it does in Luke 1:36 but that is not stated here.

Is it the sixth month of the year? If so, which calendar is meant? Could it be the Roman calendar? Or could it be the Jewish calendar? It's hard for us to know. But let me suggest a very plausible way for March 25 to be chosen for the Annunciation.

The Roman calendar was a solar calendar like ours. However, the Jewish calendar was a lunar calendar. So when we transfer dates from one calendar to the other, they appear to move every year. This is why the date for Easter moves annually.

Some early Christians may have believed that Mary conceived in the sixth month of the Jewish calendar. Jewish New Year is Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is the first of Tishrei. On our calendar, Tishrei 1 moves every year. But this year something interesting happens. Rosh Hashanah begins at sunset on September 25! Six months later is March 25 and nine months after that is December 25!

It is easy to imagine that early Christians, eager to celebrate the Annunciation and the birth of Jesus in the same way as they were observing other events in the life of Jesus, may have thought in exactly those terms.

Although I could go on, the fact is the date of the Annunciation is lost to history. However, I am certain that early Christians were sincere in their attempt to establish the date to the best of their ability and did not simply desire to supplant a pagan holiday in December.

Celebrating the day that Gabriel came to Mary reminds us that we will soon celebrate the day when the angel of the Lord came to the shepherds. Let us never forget his message, “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Prayer: O Lord, as we have known the incarnation of Your Son, Jesus Christ, by the message of the angel to the virgin Mary, so by the message of His cross and passion bring us to the glory of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Saturday

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

C Amen.

Gradual Hebrews 12:2

L O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,

C the founder and perfecter of our faith,

L who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

C and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Verse of the Day: 2 Peter 3:9b, c

L The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish,

C but that all should reach repentance.

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 10:1–13

¹I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” ⁸We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹²Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

On Sunday, I mentioned *Verbum saepeinti*—A word to the wise. We end the week where we began. The Apostle Paul writes words of warning to the Corinthian Christians to serve as a word to the wise. God’s people, the Children of Israel, received special care and attention from God during the Exodus. Yet they rejected God’s goodness and mercy. Their status as descendants of Abraham did not exempt them from the consequences of their idolatry and immorality. We must heed these examples and guard against rebellion against our gracious God.

Our Epistle lesson ends with a discussion of temptation. These verses remind me of the comedian, Flip Wilson, and his signature expression, “The Devil made me do it.” (He’s been gone a long time. You may want to watch some of his routines on YouTube.)

Paul tells us that we can never use the excuse, “The Devil made me do it.” No extraordinary or unusual temptation ever comes our way. We are only required to deal with common, everyday temptations.

And when temptation comes, God will not let us be tempted beyond our ability to resist the devil, the world, and our own sinful selves. Instead, when temptation comes, He will provide a way out so that we can endure the temptations we face. The Devil can never force us to sin. It is only the weakness of our human nature that allows us to give in.

Unfortunately, we all stumble and fall. When we do, if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for providing us with a way to escape temptation and rescuing us from the power of the Devil. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may resist the temptations that come our way and trust in Jesus for our salvation. Amen.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Enhancing Your Worship © 2022 Philip G. Quardokus. All rights reserved.