

# REFLECTIONS

ALL SAINTS -  
END OF THE CHURCH YEAR

NOVEMBER 1-28, 2020

HIGHER  
THINGS<sup>®</sup>

DARE TO BE LUTHERAN<sup>®</sup>

# All Saints - End of the Church Year

OCTOBER 4 - NOVEMBER 28, 2020

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# A Short Form for Daily Reflection

## ADAPTED FROM LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

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*Make the sign of the Holy Cross and say:*

**In the name of the Father, † Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

*Read the Psalm for the Day (A table of daily psalms can be found in Lutheran Service Book, page 304).*

*Read "Today's Reading" if there is one listed.*

*Read the Daily Lectionary selections.*

*Read the Reflection for the Day.*

*Say the Apostles' Creed.*

*Pray the Lord's Prayer.*

*Pray one of these little prayers:*

*(In the Morning)*

**I thank Thee, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray Thee to keep me this day also from sin and all evil, that all my doings and life may please Thee. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the Wicked Foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

*In the morning go to your work with joy, singing a hymn, as the Ten Commandments, or what your devotion may suggest.*

*(In the Evening)*

**I thank Thee, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast graciously kept me this day, and I pray Thee to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the Wicked Foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

*If it is evening, then go to sleep promptly and cheerfully.*

# All Saints' Day

## NOVEMBER 1, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Matthew 5:1-12

**Daily Lectionary:** Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Matthew 21:1-22

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*(Matthew 5:3)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. In the eyes of the world, those who are seen as “saints” because of their “good” lives or “good works” are supposed to be worthy of whatever God gives them. Live a good life, do good things, and God will bless you and men will call you a “saint.”

But Jesus says something else. He says the “poor in spirit” are the saints. They are “poor in spirit” not because they don’t have money but because they don’t have merit before God. They can’t come before God and say, “Look at everything I did. I’m a good person. I should have earned some credit here.”

No, true saints come before God with nothing of themselves but everything that belongs to Jesus. They say, “I have no good works; no merits; no claim on God. But I have Jesus. And He is enough. He is all that I need.”

All Saints Day is a day to remember all the saints, not just well-known “saints” who did a lot of things in this life that were memorable. No, we remember ALL the saints—all those who were baptized into Jesus’ death and resurrection and clothed with Christ, who lived mostly ordinary lives and died. But they were lives in which Christ lived. And the lives they lived they lived by faith in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20).

The world always uses that word “saint” to mean “a really good person who did a lot of nice things for others or put up with a lot.” God uses the word to mean all those who are washed and made holy by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

On All Saints Day we give thanks to Jesus for making saints. For dying and rising to forgive sins and for washing and feeding His people to make them His chosen, holy, precious saints, pure and spotless in Him. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Nothing in my hand I bring; Simply to Thy cross I cling. Naked, come to Thee for dress; Helpless, look to Thee for grace; Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Savior, or I die.*  
*(“Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” LSB 761, st.3)*

# Monday of the 21st Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 2, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Genesis 1:1-2:3

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 23:1-20; Matthew 25:14-30

*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."  
(Genesis 2:16-17)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Why did God make the Tree of Knowledge if He knew Adam and Eve would disobey Him and eat of its fruit? Why did God put that tree there at all? To test them? To trick them? Why? The answer lies in the Word that Jesus threw at the devil during His temptation in the wilderness: "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Even before there was a fall into sin, Adam and Eve were given the gift of God's Word and were taught that it was their highest treasure. That Word would keep them from death and be life and be a blessing to them. If, however, they let go of God's Word and abandoned the hearing of it, they would perish in death.

The Word of God saves you. It keeps you from death. When you are born with the curse of sin upon you, His Word declares you forgiven and a child of God. That Word that Adam and Eve ignored at the Tree of Knowledge is made flesh to hang on a tree in the place of sinners. When Adam and Eve brought death into the Garden, Jesus took on death and died and rose, conquering death in a tomb in a garden.

You see, even when man refused the Lord's gift of His life-saving Word, the Lord still brought that Word to man and still brings it now. It is the Word of grace, mercy, forgiveness—all for the sake of the Word, that is, Jesus, born, died, and risen for sinners. The same God whose Word Adam and Eve despised, spoke His Word of the promise of a Savior. It is the same Word and promise that declares Jesus' death and resurrection are for you. It is the same Word and promise spoken with the water of the font and the bread and wine of the Supper—the Word and promise of life for those who were dead in sin. The Word and promise for you. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Stay with us, Lord, and keep us true; Preserve our faith our whole life through—Your Word alone our heart's defense, The Church's glorious confidence.  
(“Lord Jesus, Christ, with Us Abide” LSB 585, st.6)*

# Tuesday of the 21st Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 3, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Ephesians 6:10-17

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 23:21-40; Matthew 25:31-46

*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*  
(Ephesians 6:17)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. If there is a theme to this week's *Reflections*, it must be the Word of God. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. Spiritus Gladius. That's Latin for "Sword of the Spirit." Why is the Word the Sword of the Spirit? The gladius was the standard Roman Army short sword. It was used for close-in fighting. It was best when used to get in close to the enemy and shove it up under his ribs. It was a deadly weapon.

Your enemies are the devil, the world, and your sinful nature. They fight dirty. They fight to kill. But the Spirit fights back. And He fights with the Word of God which pierces and defeats those enemies.

That's because the Word is the Word of Absolution. The Word that preaches Jesus. That Word that IS Jesus, the Son of God, the Word-made-flesh. He is the Word that slays the sinful flesh, strikes down the power of the world, and brings crashing to nothing the kingdom of Satan.

Your weapon against your enemies isn't your own strength. It's not your willpower and determination. It's not your attempt to try to behave and live a good life. The only thing that will defeat your enemies is the Sword of the Spirit. The Word of Baptism, Absolution, and the Supper; the Word of preaching that delivers Christ and Him crucified for sinners—that Word is the Sword of the Spirit. It is an offensive weapon by which the Spirit takes down your enemies. For where that Word is, sin and death must yield, the devil must relinquish his claim on you, and the world cannot accuse you.

The Word does what it says. It speaks forgiveness and faith. It rescues from death and the devil. It is the Spiritus Gladius by which the Holy Spirit fights back and defeats all your enemies. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Thy strong Word did cleave the darkness; At Thy speaking it was done. For created light we thank Thee, While Thine ordered seasons run. Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light does send! Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end!*  
(*"Thy Strong Word" LSB 578, st.1*)

# Wednesday of the 21st Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 4, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** *Small Catechism*: Table of Duties, Husbands  
**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 5:1-19; Matthew 22:23-46

*"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."*  
(Small Catechism: Table of Duties, Husbands)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Does Peter know what he sounds like? What's this "weaker partner" business? This is 2020! We aren't in the Dark Ages when women were considered weaker than men anymore! Come on, Peter! Get with the program! Yes, the apostle knows what he's talking about. "Weaker partner" in Greek is more accurately translated as "weaker vessel," as in a container or plate. Not like a flawed strong vessel that has been weakened somehow, but more like "fragile."

Still sounds bad, doesn't it? Well, hold up. You have delicate vessels in your house. Your parents probably got them when they got married—those wonderful dishes that are only used on the most special occasions! You know what these are called: fine china.

Now, we are starting to get what the apostle is telling us! It's not that women are weaker than men. It's that they are more precious and delicate than men! You don't break out the fine china for a hamburger. No, you treat the fine china like it's the most precious thing in your world!

Husbands are given to treat their wives like they are the most important things in their world. All the things that a man thinks are most important to him take second seat to his wife. Look at Jesus! He gives His life for His Bride, the Church. He treats Her as if there were nothing more important to Him than saving Her. Jesus, the Bridegroom, dies for Her.

A young man then should ask himself whether or not he can be Christ for the girl he wants to marry. Is she the most important person in his world? Is he willing to die for her like Christ died for His Bride? And she should ask herself whether she trusts this man to be Christ for her—to love her and give his life for her. Will he treat her like the finest china? If so, they should get married. If not, it's not meant to be.

Yes, the apostle Peter knows what he's talking about—how a husband should love a wife and how a wife should love her husband. But it's also about Jesus for you and me. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

# Thursday of the 21st Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 5, 2020

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**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 7:1-29; Matthew 23:1-12

*“The greatest among you shall be your servant.” (Matthew 23:11)*

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Yeah. How about, no. We don't do service, servitude. Sure, we know we're supposed to help others, but we don't really want to. We may chisel out time in our lives to do it, but it's not much. I have to care for myself, and the hour I put in volunteering or helping a classmate or doing my chores is enough. The only reason I do the little I do, is for that little bit of good feeling that powers me. Or I know that if I help a student in one class he can help me in another one I need help in or maybe even pay me a bit.

No matter which way you slice it, whether we're in it for the money, the praise, the good feeling. We're not in it for the sake of our neighbor, not all the time. Service is great, don't get me wrong, but service is greatest when it doesn't take much time and effort. Or maybe our time and effort are determined by who it is we're helping. The cute boy or girl, sure. But not the person we don't like, and certainly not our little brother!

Jesus is different for your sake, to save you. He's not primarily an example of servitude for you. More importantly, “The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many,” FOR YOU. He gave up His life, shed His blood, to buy you back from your sin of selfishness. And Jesus is all about serving you His salvation. He doesn't place heavy burdens on you. His yoke is easy and His burden light. He gives you His Name, the Name above every Name, for you have been baptized into Him.

He gives you His service and new life. By the work of the Spirit, Jesus bears fruit in your life. “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” are what Jesus grows in you. “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in My and I in Him.” And so His Supper strengthens you “in faith toward God and fervent love toward one another.”

Our flesh only wants to help and serve when it gets something out of it. Acting that way isn't the way Christians act. “Whoever says he loves God but hates his brother is a liar.” The solution isn't you. Christ has saved you from all that. In Him and through Him alone, you're eternally great—forgiven, saved, a baptized child of God. He does it, not you. He's also given you as a living sacrifice to those around you. He'll work through you to do it. “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.



# Friday of the 21st Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 6, 2020

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**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 8:18-9:12; Matthew 23:13-39

*"I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a den of jackals. I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant." (Jeremiah 9:11)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Wow, Lord, tell us how you really feel! Yahweh has had enough of Israel's idolatry. Jerusalem is done for. The Babylonians wiped it out in 586 BC and it got flattened again in 70 AD. God doesn't want His people trusting a city. He wants them to trust in Him. In fact, the real desolation of Jerusalem isn't that the Babylonians or Romans tore it down.

The real desolation of Jerusalem, the real ruin of the city of Judah is that on a hill outside that city, all that is evil, all that is horrible, all that is sin and wickedness and deserving of punishment, all that is hellish, was heaped upon Jesus. Jerusalem's destruction was a picture of what would happen to Jesus. The enemies of God would destroy the city. They killed Christ. Sin, death, and the curse of the Law all got a hold of Him and killed Him.

That all happened so that we have something to trust in other than our crumbling cities. We try to find refuge, comfort, and solace in people, places, and things. But none of the things that we love to make into our gods can save us. All attention on the desolation of Jerusalem: the Son of God crucified for sinners.

So that you will never be desolate. So that you will never be alone. So that you will never be destroyed. The destruction and crumbling of the things around us is the Lord's way of reminding us that nothing in this world is permanent. Nothing in this world can save us. There is nothing left but the Son of God on Calvary, His salvation delivered by water, Word and Supper. Without that, everything is a crumbling desolation and wasteland. With that, with Him, with His gifts, wherever we are is full of life and joy and gladness.

Do you ever feel like the Lord has wiped out your city? Ruined your life? Let everything be wrecked? It can't be so. Not with Jesus having died and risen for you. Whatever seems horrible and destructive now is simply a reminder that your only hope is Jesus and all that He has accomplished for you by His life, death, and resurrection. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*We, where no trouble distraction can bring, Safely the anthems of Zion shall sing; While for Your grace, Lord, their voices of praise Your blessed people shall evermore raise. ("Oh, What Their Joy" LSB 675, st.3)*

# Saturday of the 21st Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 7, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Introit for Third-Last Sunday of the Church Year  
(Psalm 130:1-2, 7-8; antiphon: vs.3-4)

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 11:1-23; Matthew 24:1-28

*If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.*

*(From the Introit for the Third-Last Sunday of the Church Year)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. What if when you went to church tomorrow, you had to write down all the sins you did this past week and then, one by one, the pastor would read them. Church would last a lot longer than an hour! And who would come back again to be shamed that way?

Yet that's how so many people think God operates—that He's just compiling a big long list of your sins and you'll have to hear it read before you enter the pearly gates.

But that's not what the psalm says! If the Lord did that, if He kept track, we'd be done for. Doomed. But He doesn't, because with Him there is forgiveness. That's why He sent His Son and why Jesus the Son lived and died and rose again. To get rid of the record! To hide the evidence and cover it with His blood. To make the accusations against you illegible so they must be thrown out of court. Jesus has paid for your sin in full.

The Divine Service is just the opposite of a time of shame for what you've done. Tomorrow everything in the service is a promise and reminder that God does NOT mark iniquities. He DOESN'T keep track. He has expunged the record. Blotted out your sins. Forgotten them. Forgiven you.

From the words of the Invocation, recalling your Baptism, through Absolution, the reading of God's Word, the sermon preaching Christ crucified and the Supper delivering the life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus—all of this is the Lord's promise that He does not mark your iniquities. There's no keeping track. There's no keeping score.

The Divine Service is one big reminder that with the Lord there is nothing but forgiveness for sinners. No shame there—only rejoicing in having such a merciful and loving Savior. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Lord, I believe, were sinners more Than sands upon the ocean shore, Thou has for all a ransom paid, For all a full atonement made.*

*("Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness" LSB 563, st.4)*

# The Third-Last Sunday of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 8, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Matthew 24:15-28

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 20:1-18; Matthew 24:29-51

*On account of the elect those days will be shortened.*

*(Matthew 24:22)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Lord cares for you. He and His Father, in the unity of the Spirit, created everything in the universe as a gift for you. This Triune God knitted you together in your mother's womb. The Son became man for you, died, rose, and ascended to run the universe for your good. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to you in the water and Word of Holy Baptism. Jesus breathes more life into you through the Word of God. Jesus delivers the forgiveness of sins to you through the pastor He hand-picked. Jesus uses His power to deliver His Body and Blood to you for the forgiveness of sins in order to strengthen your faith toward God and that you would have fervent love toward those around you.

Things are going to get bad. If you think they're bad now, well, I've got news for you, they'll get worse. That's what Jesus says. He's warning us so that we're not surprised or unprepared. "There will be great tribulation," Jesus says, "such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" (Matthew 24:21). Wars. Rumors of wars. Famines. Earthquakes. Persecution. Christians will fall away and betray one another. Love will grow cold (Matthew 24:6-12). And false Christs and false prophets "will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24).

Sound scary? You bet! But read that first paragraph again if you need to. I'll say it again here: The Lord cares for you. He won't abandon you. That's His baptismal promise to you: "I am with you always until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). That includes the last days Jesus is talking about in Matthew 24. In fact, He cuts those days short for you. You were chosen in Him from creation, and at Holy Baptism. "I have called you by name, you are mine," He says (Isaiah 43:1).

You're not on your own, especially in the scary times. Jesus is there for you. He cares for you. He created you. He saved you. He gathers you to His table where He gives you His Body to eat and His Blood to drink, which strengthen and keep you, body and soul, unto life everlasting. And on the Last Day He will gather you to Himself forever to live with Him in eternal life. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Wherever the corpse is, there the eagles will be gathered.*

*(Matthew 24:28)*

# Monday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 9, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Exodus 32:1-20

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 22:1-23; Matthew 25:1-13

*Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Your servants. To them You swore by Yourself...* (Exodus 32:13)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Salvation. Freedom. Life. All those things the Lord Jesus worked for His people Israel. It was Him. Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58). He doesn't just save us from sin and death, but He also saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and from death by Pharaoh. (The exodus is a type, a picture, of Jesus' salvation at Calvary.)

Ten Plagues. The Red Sea. That's how He did it. "With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (Deuteronomy 4:34). No one could oppose Him, stop Him from saving His people. So also you: Nothing could stop Him. Not your sins. Not Pilate. Not the religious leaders. Not even death itself. In fact, the Lord used all those things to save you. Israel was saved, safe and secure, dwelling at the foot of the Lord's mountain, in His presence, until He would bring them into the Promised Land of Canaan. (A type, a picture, of Jesus' Church and His bringing you to eternal life with Him.)

Unfaith. That's what it was met with. The Israelites were stiff-necked, stubborn. They didn't have faith in Yahweh. They wanted a god like the gods in Egypt they'd been rescued from. That's right, they weren't just rescued from slavery to Pharaoh but slavery to the false gods of the Egyptians. We, too, turn back to false gods: money, success, political leaders. Whatever or will promise us a better life or make us feel better. "Behold, O Israel, the gods that brought you out of the land of Egypt."

What's the Lord to do now? Wrath. Punishment. More plagues! Maybe a virus or an economic downturn. Those are certainly consequences of a sin-filled, sin-broken world. But is that what the Lord will do with you? Wipe you out? Not so with Israel! "Remember," Moses says. He throws the Lord's promises back in His face. So also you. Jesus stepped in for you. He took your punishment at Calvary, and when you get caught in your sins, which really do deserve wrath and hell for you, the Lord's promises stand for you. The true Red Sea of your Baptism has saved you, delivering forgiveness. The true manna of Jesus' Body and Blood give you new life, set apart from your sins, and also eternal salvation.

In His crucifixion, in His dying for you, in His empty tomb, rising for you: "Behold, your God, who brought you out of the Land of Egypt." In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

# Tuesday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 10, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 23:1-20; Matthew 25:14-30

*If we believe that Jesus died and rose, thus we also believe that God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.*

*(1 Thessalonians 4:14)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. You can have hope. In a hopeless world, there really is hope. You don't have to despair. There's no reason to give up or be angry at others. No reason to get upset by what happens or to be afraid of a virus. You don't have to be scared. You have hope.

The world is hopeless. That's the foundation of a lot of people's worldview. The world's hopeless because it's meaningless. The only meaning we have is what we make for ourselves. The universe came from nothing. The world will return to nothing. We're just a speck of dust in the vast universe that's spinning out of control—no rhyme or reason to it. There's destruction, disease, and death. It's what we see. It's what we experience.

But there is hope. When someone dies or there's disease or destruction, you don't have to grieve like other people who have no hope. You don't have to get angry. You don't have to despair. Your hope has a Name: Jesus.

When everything seems hopeless, Jesus is your Hope. When everything's dark, He is your Light. When you've got conflict and fear, He is your peace. When you've got sins, Jesus is your redemption. When you're struggling in the good works God's given you to do, Jesus is your righteousness. When you die--whenever and however you die-- Jesus is your life.

Jesus is risen from the dead! His empty tomb changes the universe. Dead people don't stay dead anymore! His empty tomb changes your universe—and your eternity, too! Not only because Jesus died and rose for you, but because you've been baptized into His death and His resurrection. You will rise from the dead because in Baptism you have already. Now death is just a nap. You will sleep in Jesus because you're baptized.

You'll rise in Jesus, too. He will raise you from the dead, along with all those who have already fallen asleep trusting in Him. At the final trumpet, the Last Day, you and all other believers in Christ will rise from the dead and live forever with Jesus. His Father will do this for you, by the Spirit, though His Son. Your Baptism says so!

Christ is risen! You're baptized! Different parts of the same gift, the same truth, the same hope. That hope is yours, delivered at the font. Now Jesus is yours and you are His, now and forever. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

# Wednesday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 11, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** *Small Catechism:* Table of Duties, Wives

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 23:21-40; Matthew 25:31-46

*Wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.*

*(Small Catechism: Table of Duties, Wives)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Submission in the world is the way of power and force. It's one person dominating another, being in charge of another. But this is NOT what Paul's talking about here with wives and husbands! Submission between husbands and wives, as far as Christians are concerned, has to do with serving and being served. It's the way of love, the way of Christ FOR YOU.

Jesus is Lord, but not in the almighty power way. He does have that. But Jesus is Lord for you in the saving-you way, the dying way. Lord means Savior. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

He gave His life for the sake of His Bride, the Church. She is His own Body. He is Her Head, Her Savior. The Church submits to Christ by being saved by Him. He submits Himself for Her sake, to die and rise for Her. You are a member of His Body, for you are baptized into Him through "the washing of water and the Word," (Ephesians 5:26) and you receive His Body and Blood as "He feeds and cares for her" (Ephesians 5:29). His Bride is more important than His own life. You and I are, too, for we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:11).

So, ladies, the best husband is one who will serve you as Christ served the Church. Guys, the best lady is the one you would serve and put first. Dying to self, putting another's life and wants first—husband's submission. Dying to self, letting another serve—wife's submission. "Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

This all points to Christ. It's why He, His Father, and the Spirit created us. It's why He marries and gives in marriage. "What God has joined together..." (Matthew 19:6). He gives His life for His Bride, the Church, His Body. You are of that Body.

It's not the way the world does it. Christ's serving, forgiving, is His being your Lord, your Savior. It's true with us, too. Loving. Serving. Forgiving. He works that in us by His Spirit. Faith toward God and sincere love for each other, even husbands and wives. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*  
*(Ephesians 5:23 NIV)*

# Thursday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 12, 2020

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**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 25:1-18; Matthew 26:1-19

*For thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me, "Take this wine cup of wrath from My hand and make all the nations, to which I am sending you, drink it."  
(Jeremiah 25:16)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Lord pours out His wrath on His people and the nations. His wrath over sin and against sinners seems unquenchable. It's not just fire and brimstone or lightning bolts from heaven. It's not plagues and pandemics, at least not always. The wrath that's coming in Jeremiah is a little bit different.

The wrath in Jeremiah is nation rising against nation. Babylonians over Israel. Persians over the Babylonians. Eventually Greeks over them, Romans over them, and on down the line to the nations we have today. But what's the big deal? That's what happens in a sinful world. Right?

It wasn't supposed to be that way for Israel. The Lord would give them power, protection, prosperity. But Israel wanted to be just like the other nations, not only by having a king. That was just a symptom. The real problem is they didn't want the LORD to be their King, and truth be told, they didn't want Him to be their God. So the Lord gave them just what they wanted. They got the false gods. They used sex as their god and sacrificed their own children. They got the kings and alliances and treaties. They also got being conquered. That's what it's like for the other nations.

None of that sort of turning away from Him will do. He can't stand false gods, false worship, and sins WE produce. So, the Lord pours out His wrath on His people and on the nations. The Lord's wrath seems unquenchable. He pours it out, but not in the way we suspect.

"Father, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless not My will but Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus, the Son of God, takes the wrath of God into Himself. He drinks that cup to the dregs, nothing left. He drinks the wrath that means hell itself. Jesus drinks that up for you. He is conquered by death and forsaken by His Father so you won't be. He is counted as a sinner so you receive the overflowing cup of God's mercy and forgiveness.

That Cup is yours (more on that tomorrow). Jesus gives it to you overflowing with forgiveness in the Supper. There is no wrathful cup for you. So in a world full of sin and death there are forgiveness and life and salvation and peace for you. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*And when Jesus finished all these words, He said to His disciples, "You know that the Passover happens in two days, and the Son of Man is handed over to be crucified."  
(Matthew 26:1)*

# Friday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 13, 2020

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**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 26:1-19; Matthew 26:20-35

*Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out FOR MANY for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:26-28)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. All the Old Testament comes to a point right here. All the Lord's promises about being with His people, living with them, eating and drinking with them, saving them, have overflowed right here. The Passover Lamb, Jesus, fulfills the Passover. He eats and drinks, and then He does something new. All the Old Testament was a shadow cast by the Body of Christ (Colossians 2:17).

We live in a world of shadows, of lies. What's real? Fake news. Scams. Politics. The internet is always true, right? What about you? Are you true, honest, pure? How much of your life is shadow? How many times does your smile conceal something else? How many times are you glad that you can hide behind a screen, a username, an avatar? Is your goodness and kindness a whitewash covering up or making up for your sins?

It is a shadow. False. Empty. Sin. Your mask, your smile, your avatar will be good only as long as you can keep it going. The shadows of the world, of your sin, and of death press in. But it won't overwhelm you, won't wipe you out. You won't be surrounded and hidden and lost in darkness.

Jesus tells you what's true about you, and FOR YOU. What is true about you is that you are righteous before God in Him. What's true FOR YOU is that Jesus died and rose for you. He did this to ransom you to the Father. He rose from the dead to bring life and immortality to life.

And our reading today is what that is all about—giving it to you. What's true about you and for you is that Jesus' Body and Blood are yours in His Supper. That's what is true. When nothing else is true or it all seems fake and empty and a shadow, "This is My Body; This is My Blood" FOR YOU.

You're bodied and blooded to Jesus. He is yours and you are His. And you're not alone, either. You and I are in this together because we both receive Jesus' Body and Blood. I'm here for you, and you're here for me. We tell each other what's true about us and for us. Jesus is! He's our Savior. He forgives us. He gives us His light. He makes His promises to us and keeps them. It all comes together at the Supper of His Body and Blood. It's the point of it all! Always more of Jesus' forgiveness and life and light for more people—"poured out for many." Even for me and FOR YOU. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.



# Saturday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 14, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Introit for the Second-Last Sunday of the Church Year (Psalm 85:1, 7, 9, 11; antiphon: Jeremiah 29:11a, 12)

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 29:1-19; Matthew 26:36-56

*Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.* (From the Introit for the Second-Last Sunday)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. That's a Last Day promise for you. The Lord is true to His promises, He keeps them, does them. The Lord is righteous and He looks down in mercy on those whom He's made righteous, and He will make His holy ones, His saints, spring up from the ground. He will raise their bodies from the dead. Death can't and won't win! This is the Lord's Last-Day promise.

This is a Last-Day promise because it's also a Jesus promise, a promise kept in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He "came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man." He lives a righteous life FOR US, in our place. His righteousness is counted as ours. He "was also crucified FOR US under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried," placed into the ground. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone" (John 12:24). "The third day He rose again from the dead." True to His promise, His faithfulness, He sprung up again from the ground. That's Jesus alive again, never to die again.

This is a right-now promise, too. Tomorrow you'll gather for the Divine Service. There the Lord your righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6) will look down upon you in mercy, and He will pour out His righteousness upon you, His forgiveness for all your sins. His Word of promise, His faithfulness, will spring up, as it were, from the ground in His Word and Gifts. Worldly, physical things that deliver the Lord's faithfulness and righteousness to you so that you would become faithful and righteous in Him. Spirit-filled Word from the Bible. Spirit-filled forgiveness from your pastor. Jesus' Body and Blood that are delivered to you through the bread and the wine of Holy Communion.

So, in these last days we wait for the Last Day. The Lord will do what He says. He will save you. He will preserve you and keep you safe. He will raise you from the dead. Jesus' death and His empty tomb and His Word and Gifts tell you so. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

# The Second-Last Sunday of the Church Year

## NOVEMBER 15, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 30:1-24; Matthew 26:57-75

*Then the King will say to those at His right: "Come, those blessed by My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared FOR YOU from the foundation of the world."  
(Matthew 25:34)*

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Jesus will come. He has to. He's promised it. Jesus always keeps His promises. He promised He would be born of a virgin, and He was. He promised that He would die on a cross. He promised that He would rise from the dead, come back to life on the Third Day, and He did. He promised that He would ascend into heaven, and He did!

Jesus alone saves you. You don't save yourself. Not even a little bit. Jesus' blood covers all your sins. You are 100% forgiven in Jesus. Only in Him. There's nothing you could've done to earn it, nothing you can do now to keep it. You don't have to worry about losing it in the future. The Kingdom was all prepared for you when God created the universe. Saving you wasn't Plan B. From forever He planned for you to be with Him, and He doesn't just plan it. He makes it happen. He's promised it. He'll do it.

Good works, too. That's part of His plan for you—for you to do them. He makes that happen, too. He's planned for you to be where you are, right now, just so that you would have people in your life to love and serve, and so that they would have you in their lives for them to receive service, care, and love from God through you.

Paul says the very same thing in Ephesians as Jesus said. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Ephesians 1:3-4). "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

You are in Christ. Eternal life is yours. Won by Christ. Delivered in His Word and Gifts. Inheritance by way of gift, not by earning. Inheritance comes because of the death of the one giving it—Christ FOR YOU. And on the Last Day, no fear for you. You're in Jesus. His blood redeemed you from your sins, and His blood also covered all your works, too. That's why they're good! According to Jesus' parable, when you're His sheep, you're a good sheep. 100%. All in Him. FOR YOU. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

# Monday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 16, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Daniel 7:9-14

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 31:1-17, 23-34; Matthew 27:1-10

*To Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, and all peoples, nations, and languages served Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.*

*(Daniel 7:14)*

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. The Trinity is present in Daniel 7. The Spirit is the giver of dreams. He not only gave Daniel visions, dreams, and prophecies, but also gave Daniel the meaning of those things. In this Spirit-given vision Daniel sees the Ancient of Days, the Father. Daniel also sees the Son of Man: Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who became man. Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this vision.

The Son is getting the Kingdom in this vision. His Kingdom is everlasting and can't be destroyed because His Kingdom is not of this world. His Kingdom of mercy, love, and forgiveness is kicked off at Calvary. There Jesus was enthroned, crucified for you. He was sent from the Father, born of the Virgin Mary. Mary's Son "will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:33). The Spirit delivers this Kingdom in the preaching of the Gospel and the delivering of Christ's Gifts. That's what Pentecost was all about in Acts 2, because there were "devout men from every nation under heaven" in Jerusalem that day.

This is where you come in. You're part of the all peoples and nations that are in the Son of Man's Kingdom. He ransomed you back to His Father. He sent the Spirit to you. You've been washed in "the new birth of the Holy Spirit," as Paul says in Titus 3. You will see and enter the Kingdom of God because you've been "born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:3, 5).

Daniel's vision is all about the eternal reality of your salvation. The Son of Man rules over you, in His Kingdom of forgiveness and mercy—the very things He showers upon you. It's how He would rule through you, too.

Jesus wields His power and authority to save you, not only to die and rise for you, but also to baptize you and to deliver His Word into your ears, heart, mind, and soul. The almighty Jesus uses His authority FOR YOU, for your benefit, and not OVER you in some power play. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to cherish all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

# Tuesday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 17, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** 2 Peter 3:3-14

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 33:1-22; Matthew 27:11-32

*The Lord of the Promise is not slow, as some consider slowness, but He is patient towards all you, not wanting any to be destroyed but all to reach repentance.*  
(2 Peter 3:9)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. You've got to admit things have been pretty bad in 2020. Pandemic. Riots. Economic trouble. Droughts. Fires. Earthquakes. And there's also been the US election. Why does it all happen?

Ever since Adam and Eve rebelled against God and threw each other under the bus, it's been this way. It's all rebellious—me against you, you against me—because we're selfish. The results of sin are evident in our world. It's not just how we treat each other. It's what happens to us, too! The world, the universe, even our bodies don't work the way God created them to be because everything has been affected by sin.

Why doesn't God put a stop to it? Peter tells us: "He is patient towards all of you." We're the reason God is slow in putting an end to it all. Do we even consider ourselves part of the problem? God doesn't act like He's got an Infinity Gauntlet to wipe out evil with a snap of His fingers, because then He'd have to wipe you and me out, too. He doesn't want anyone to be destroyed. He wants all to reach repentance. Yes, even you.

Soon everything will be done away with, "with a roar." And if you were on the receiving end, it would be scary, but you're not. There's a different cry that stands FOR YOU. "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit" (Matthew 27:50). All your sins, all our diseases "in His own body." "By His wounds you are healed" (1 Peter 2:24). He wants you to receive this cross-won salvation and be baptized into it, made a new creation by water and the Word (2 Corinthians 5:17). He wants you to receive the medicine of eternal life, true healing, in the Supper of His Body and Blood. You have the promise of forgiveness and eternal life, for "whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in Him, and I will resurrect Him on the Last Day" (John 6:56, 54).

God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle." (1 Timothy 2:4-7) Peter tells us that this includes you and me, too. Jesus' Word and Gifts make it so. He keeps His promise to you. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

# Wednesday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 18, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** *Small Catechism*: Table of Duties, Parents  
**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 37:1-21; Matthew 27:33-56

*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

(Small Catechism: Table of Duties, Parents)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Your parents are a gift to you. Maybe you've got step-parents, or your parents adopted you, or maybe you're raised by your grandparents or other relatives, even foster parents! No matter what, the Lord's given them to care for you. It's not just food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, and home, either. Those are the great gifts of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed, which you daily ask for in the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, and God Your heavenly Father gives you through the parents or care providers He's given you. As good as those things are, it's not the primary reason God gifted your parents to you.

You were given to them, and they to you. God gave the way He did so that you would be brought up in the "training and instruction of the Lord." The Lord wanted you to receive His Word and Gifts. He wanted you to be baptized, to hear His Word, go to Sunday School and church, receive Jesus' Body and Blood. He died for you and rose for you, and now "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me" (Matthew 28:28), He says. He used that power to give His Word and Sacraments to you, and giving your parents to you and you to them is part of that.

What if sin is messing it up? What if things aren't so good in the parent department? Maybe sin has left you with a broken and messed up family. The Lord Jesus came for sin-broken families. He came from one! Thieves, liars, cheats, adulterers, murderers, prostitutes—all Jesus' relatives. He shed His blood for all the sins we commit, and all the sins that affect us in our daily lives and personal relationships.

He also hand-picked your pastor for you. Your pastor is a special Holy-Spirit-worked gift from Jesus, given to deliver Jesus and His Word and Sacraments to you. He's been called by the Spirit and ordained by Jesus in order to bring you up "in the training and instruction of the Lord."

That's what it's all about. Jesus saving you. He loves you through others—your parents, your pastor. He loves others through you—your parents, your pastor. It's not chiefly about body and life stuff, but about His Word and Gifts that deliver His salvation to you. He made sure He died and rose for you. He'll make sure He delivers His gifts in many and various ways, and through many different people. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

# Thursday of the Second-Last Week

## NOVEMBER 19, 2020

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**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 38:1-28; Matthew 27:57-66

*When Joseph took the body, he wrapped it in a clean cloth and placed it in his new tomb that he cut in the rock, and after he rolled a great stone against the door of the tomb, he went away. (Matthew 27:59-60)*

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Jesus really died. He was stone-cold dead. The Romans were good at that sort of thing. He was so dead they buried Him! In a stone tomb, Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. And what did Jesus do in that tomb? Well, nothing obviously. Duh! He was dead! But that's really the point. He didn't do anything. He rested. When the Lord created the universe in six days, He rested on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. So also Holy Week, where Jesus worked to secure and create a new creation—salvation. Jesus fulfilled all that He was supposed to do to save you—perfect life and innocent suffering and death. And now that He had done all of His work, He rested.

He was buried for you. He made the Sabbath holy in His burial for you. He rested for you. He gives you His rest. His rest from work. You don't have to work to save yourself. There's nothing left for you to do. Jesus did it all. He saved you, and you are saved by Him. His rest from work is your rest from work because He delivers His rest from work to you.

He delivers that to you in His Sabbath Gifts—His Baptism, His Absolution, His Gospel, His Supper. There Jesus' free salvation, His resting from working for salvation, is made yours, delivered right to you. And you receive it by faith alone in Christ alone. You are Sabbath-ed, rested in Jesus through His Gifts.

His tomb didn't stay empty. His body didn't stay dead. He was buried to save you from your burial, your grave, your death. He will give you an empty tomb, too. Your body won't stay dead, either. That's the promise of His grave and His resurrection. This promise is delivered in Holy Baptism where you were buried with Christ and also raised with Him.

Jesus was really dead. You will really die someday, too. But Jesus didn't stay dead. Neither will you! Jesus' rest shows you that. Jesus will raise you from the dead, just as He is risen from the dead. The promise of that is yours. You're baptized. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

*Death, you cannot end my gladness: I am baptized into Christ! When I die, I leave all sadness To inherit paradise! Though I lie in dust and ashes Faith's assurance brightly flashes: Baptism has the strength divine To make life immortal mine. (God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It" LSB 594, st.4)*

# Friday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 20, 2020

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**Daily Lectionary:** Daniel 1:1-21; Matthew 28:1-20

*Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.*

*(Daniel 1:21)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Daniel found himself in Babylon. He was taken away from Israel, by force. You see, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II conquered Judah, and started deporting people from Canaan (modern day Israel) into Babylon (modern day Iraq). Nebuchadnezzar started with the best and the brightest and forced them to live a long way from home, in his service. That's Daniel.

What does Daniel do? He recognizes Israel's sin in their current situation (Daniel 9). He remains faithful to Yahweh and cherishes His mercy along with His Word in a foreign land. But Daniel also loved his neighbor, even his Babylonian neighbor, King Nebuchadnezzar! Daniel faithfully served the Babylonians and the Persians after them for about 50 years.

God put you where you are. He put the people in your life exactly where they are just so they'd be in your life, just like God did with Daniel. Daniel believed that what his enemies meant for evil, God meant for good. So also you. You were "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that you would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). That "created in Christ Jesus" happened in Holy Baptism. God planned your good works for you. Now you'll use your Baptism, God's working through you, so that you would be a gift for the people He's gifted to you.

How long will you do it? Who knows? God does. Daniel served for some 50 years under at least four kings and two empires, after being taken away by force from his homeland. So the Lord will use you for however long He gives you. It's all gift.

He's saved you. He's died and risen for you. He's given you new life in Baptism, a new life of being a living sacrifice for others. He forgives you when you mess it up or complain about it. He'll carry you through. And no matter how long you live or where you live, Jesus' baptismal promise is the same: "I am with you always even till the end of the age." Through thick and thin, He's yours and you are His, and He will bring you to Himself in His eternal kingdom which has no end. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to cherish everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* *(Matthew 28:18-20)*

# Saturday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 21, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Introit for the Last Sunday of the Church Year  
(Psalm 39:4-5, 7-8; antiphon: Isaiah 35:10)

**Daily Lectionary:** Daniel 2:1-23; Revelation 18:1-24

*The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

*(From the Introit for the Last Sunday of the Church Year)*

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. The Lord's ransomed you. He's paid the penalty. Wiped the slate clean. His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death did it. You were chosen in Him before the creation of the world, and He chose you in the new-creation waters of Holy Baptism.

Life is tough and seems to get tougher all the time. What will college hold? Your career? Your life? The reality is one day it will all go away because you will go away. I know it seems like it's a long way off, but it's coming.

When I put it that way it may seem pointless, right? Meaningless, even. It could make you despair. But just because it will all go away doesn't mean it's not a gift from the Lord to take care of you and take care of others through you. And just because you will go away—die doesn't mean you won't come back. Because you will!

You will return! You'll come back...from the dead! All that's wrong with the world, all that's wrong with you, everything that gives you sorrow, that makes you sigh, will run away scared. They'll run from the Lord when He returns, when He returns to make you return to life.

He will raise you from the dead. He's already taken care of the source of all the sorrow and sighing—sin! He's ransomed you from sin, redeemed you, forgiven you in His death and resurrection. Delivered that forgiveness in water, words, Body and Blood, and He's also given you His resurrection in Baptism, and the promise of the resurrection in His Body and Blood!

You'll rise to eternal life. You'll be brought into the true Zion, the eternal kingdom. You'll have eternal joy and gladness as you stand in the presence of Christ, your Savior, of His and your Father, and of the Holy Spirit, as you're surrounded by all your fellow ransomed, with all the angels and archangels, too. The ransomed of the Lord "shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:16-17). In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.



# The Last Sunday of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 22, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Matthew 25:1-13

**Daily Lectionary:** Daniel 22:24-49; Revelation 19:1-21

*In the middle of the night there was a shout, "Look, the Bridegroom!  
Come out to greet Him!"* (Matthew 25:6)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Jesus will come. He will come to kick off the eternal feast, the eternal party, the eternal celebration. Jesus will send forth the Holy Spirit to raise the dead. The Spirit "will give eternal life to you and all believers in Christ" (*Small Catechism: Apostles Creed, Third Article*). And so you "will live under [Christ] in His Kingdom and serve in Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity" (*Small Catechism: Apostles Creed, Second Article*).

His return is unexpected. It will be just like thunder waking you up in the middle of the night. The sound will be the cry of the angel, and he'll be announcing Christ. "Look! It's Him! It's Jesus! He's the Bridegroom! Come out and greet Him!" And those who trust in Him will not be put to shame. They will enter with Christ into the Marriage Feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom which has no end. What about those who bartered, bargained, and bet on His coming and what was necessary in their relationship with Him, saying, "We've got enough, right?" Well, they are left out. "Go away. I never knew you," Jesus will say.

There's no "enough" when it comes to the Lord Jesus. No, with Him there's always more—always more mercy, always more forgiveness. Just look at what He does! For your salvation, it wasn't enough for Him to become man or suffer or die or rise or ascend into heaven. No, now He rules the universe so that you would always have more than enough of His cup-overflowing salvation. He makes you His own in Holy Baptism—He knows you. You know Him, too, through His Word. There you hear of His love, His mercy, His forgiveness, His death and resurrection: preaching, Bible, Absolution, forgiveness. He hosts for you His Feast of Victory, the Supper of His Body and Blood for the forgiveness of your sins.

Jesus is the true Bridegroom, and the Church His true Bride. He gives Himself into death for Her, He makes Her holy, He nourishes and cares for Her. And His Bride, the Holy Church, has been died for, made holy, fed, and cared for. We are members of His Body, the Church. Not because of how wise we are or how righteous, pure, virgin-like we are. No, you and I are members of His Body because we eat and drink of His Body and Blood. He remains with us and we remain with Him and He will resurrect us on the Last Day. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen

# Monday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 23, 2020

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**Today's Reading: Isaiah 65:17-25**

**Daily Lectionary: Daniel 3:1-30; Revelation 20:1-15**

*I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in My people, and a sound of weeping or a sound of crying will never be heard in her. (Isaiah 65:19)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. We rejoice in God because of what He's done for us. He is our delight because He is our Savior. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Worthy is Christ the Lamb whose blood set us free to be people of God!

The Father's delight is in His Son. The Son's delight is in His Bride, the Church, the new and true and even heavenly Jerusalem. He gave Himself up for Her, making Her holy through the washing of water with the Word (Ephesians 5:25-26). His joy is saving you: "For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

There's nothing delightful in us, spiritually speaking. Sure we have all the wonderful gifts and talents God gives us—"every good gift is from above" (James 1:17). But these things, as wonderful as they are for loving and serving our neighbor, do us no good before God. "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples" (Deuteronomy 7:7). "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14).

He will rejoice over you eternally. He will fill you with joy. There will be no more crying or mourning. There will be no more death (Revelation 7:17, 21:4). "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind" (Isaiah 65:17).

When the troubles of this life surround you, know that it's already been undone in the death and resurrection of Jesus. There the eternal party kicked off. People rose from the dead on Good Friday! You're a part of that. You've died and risen with Christ. You've heard the Absolution—heaven's gates are opened to you. You've received the Body and Blood of Jesus, which is the Lord's victory Feast. The eternal life, delivered in the forgiveness of sins, is yours right now. The eternal life of the Last Day will be yours, too. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

# Tuesday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 24, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

**Daily Lectionary:** Daniel 4:1-37; Revelation 21:1-8

*For God has not appointed us for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died FOR US, that either awake or asleep we would live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and build one another up, just as you are also doing.*

*(1 Thessalonians 5:9-11)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. God doesn't want wrath for you. He doesn't want to send you to hell, condemning you, destroying you. He wants to save. That's His eternal will for you. From eternity the Triune God planned to save you, chose you in Jesus. And so that's exactly what God did.

He appointed you to obtain salvation, that is, to reach salvation, to receive salvation. He did that through Jesus. He died for us, for all of us! For God the Father loved the world in that way, by giving up His Son so that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life. You are saved because Jesus died for you. You obtain that salvation, receive it. It's delivered to you. We don't want to miss this point. It's important for the last part of what Paul's saying here. So often we glide right past it as Lutherans.

The Triune God managed everything so that you would obtain salvation at the font in the water and Word of Holy Baptism. He made it so that you would be able to hear and receive His Word. God the Father created bread and wine, the Son chose them and speaks over them His Word to deliver His Body and Blood for your forgiveness, and the Spirit hand-picked your pastor so that you have His man to deliver not only that Body and Blood, but also Absolution, preaching, and Baptism.

You, too! You're in on the Lord's appointing people for obtaining salvation. For as Paul says, "Therefore comfort each other and build one another up, just as you are also doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). He's given you to your neighbor to point him to the Lord's delivering of salvation through His Word and Gifts. You comfort those around you with the comfort of the Gospel that says, "Jesus Christ died and rose for you."

This means that you will live with Him, and I will, too! We've heard and received and believed that Jesus died and rose for us. God moved history to make this happen. So, you're saved! What comfort! Now it doesn't matter if you live or die, you will live again with Jesus. After all, God has appointed you to obtain this salvation, receive it, believe it. And through His Son and by the Spirit that's exactly what happens for you. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

## Wednesday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 25, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** *Small Catechism:* Table of Duties, Children

**Daily Lectionary:** Daniel 5:1-30; Revelation 21:9-27

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

*(Small Catechism: Table of Duties, Children)*

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. You're a gift to your parents. Of all the people that could be your parents, you got the ones you received as a gift. Of all the kids they could've gotten, they were given you as a gift. It's all gift from the Lord.

He's the Lord of loving, serving, saving. Him FOR YOU. He was born of the Virgin Mary. She, His mother. He, her Son. She, His servant. He, her Lord, her Savior. He loved and served her, even giving her into the care of John at the Cross. There He died for Mary, for John, for you, and for your parents. There He shed His blood.

Into this death and into His Easter coming back to life, He's baptized you. In Jesus you are now a living sacrifice to your parents. You love and serve them. You care for them. You forgive them! They need it! You do, too. They forgive you. Your pastor forgives you and them. You receive Jesus' Body and Blood together. You are all one in Him.

Even if they're weird, they are the hand-picked gift for you, and you the hand-picked gift for them. This is all for your good and their good, too. Not to backtalk, but forgive. Not to ignore their word but to rejoice in their teaching, especially from God's Word.

But when you or they mess it up and fight, you all have the same Savior, the same Jesus, the same Baptism, the same Body and Blood. You are forgiven in Jesus. That's the true gift that Jesus makes sure you and your parents have, receive, and share in. It's why He's gifted you the way He has. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

*"You are to honor and obey Your father, mother, ev'ry day, Serve them each way that comes to hand; You'll then live long in the land." Have mercy, Lord!*  
*("These Are the Holy Ten Commands" LSB 581, st.5)*

# Thursday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 26, 2020

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**Daily Lectionary:** Daniel 6:1-28; Revelation 22:1-21

*The king spoke up and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, was your God, whom you serve continually, able to save you from the lions?" Then Daniel spoke with the king, "Long live the king! My God sent His angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions, and they didn't harm me. All because of this: I was found innocent before Him, and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." (Daniel 6:20-23)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Daniel was as good as dead. He was a son of Israel, a worshiper of the true God. He prayed and was condemned to death. King Darius had been tricked into condemning one of his best and closest advisors. Accused by his fellow rulers, he was locked inside that lions' den overnight, never to come out again. But thanks be to God, he did come out again.

In a foreign land, Daniel loved and served a foreign king. He didn't just skirt by but served his neighbor well. Daniel wasn't saved because of this but was given eternal salvation as a free gift. Innocent because of the sacrifice of the coming Savior. It sounds like following God means He will save you from dying if you're good enough. He will certainly care for the body and life He's gifted to you, but that's not what this story's about. As Jesus tells the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures for you think that in them you possess eternal life, and it is they that testify about Me" (John 5:39). That's Daniel in the lions' den in spades!

What happened in Daniel 6 plays out again some 580 years later. The women go to the tomb, expecting to find a dead Jesus, but that's not what they find at all. Jesus wasn't just as good as dead, He was dead! But then He wasn't. God raised Him from the dead, and there was even an angel there to announce it.

What happened to Jesus will certainly happen to you. You've earned death because of your sin, but Jesus shed His blood for you. Now you, like Daniel, are found innocent before your heavenly Father. That's all yours in Baptism. Rejoice in the story of Daniel. It's a picture of Jesus' resurrection and yours. "Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay." (Matthew 28:5-6)*

# Friday of the Last Week

## NOVEMBER 27, 2020

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**Daily Lectionary:** Isaiah 1:1-28; 1 Peter 1:1-12

*Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He beget us again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance that is guarded in heaven FOR YOU who are protected by God's power through faith so that [His] ready salvation would be revealed in the last time.* (1 Peter 1:3-5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. You're baptized. That's everything! We don't want to sidestep it or put it in the past. No, you're baptized, and as Peter says later in his letter, "Baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21). Right now it does. Salvation in Jesus Christ alone is your right through Holy Baptism. Your faith grasps hold of this promise.

His salvation's ready. Signed. Sealed. Delivered. Jesus is risen from the dead. That's your living hope because Jesus is alive. He is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, and so is your faith because it clings to Him. He is your salvation. He is your shield and great reward (Genesis 15). He is your shade in trouble (Psalm 121:5-6). He is your shelter when all seems hopeless (Psalm 61:4). At His right hand are eternal pleasures (Psalm 16:11).

That salvation is kept safe in heaven, where Jesus is. It's there FOR YOU. Christ is there FOR YOU. "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

And it's all yours. It really is. Why? Because you're baptized! "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit He cannot enter the Kingdom of God," Jesus says (John 3:5). Or as the inspired Paul says, "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying" (Titus 3:5-8, *Small Catechism*: Baptism).

You're baptized. That's everything! You don't have to be afraid of anything, though you are. You're baptized. God's got you. You're His child. Jesus is your Brother. The Spirit's yours. Jesus' resurrection is yours now through Baptism (Romans 6) and so it will be yours on the Last Day, too. You don't even have to be afraid of that! All that day will do is reveal as true what you've already believed by faith. Jesus is risen from the dead for you, and you're in on that because you're baptized. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

# Saturday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 28, 2020

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**Today's Reading:** Introit for the First Sunday in Advent

(Psalm 25:4-5, 21-22; antiphon: v.1-3a)

**Daily Lectionary:** Isaiah 2:1-22; 1 Peter 1:13-25

*Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.*

*(From the Introit for the First Sunday in Advent)*

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. You need the Lord to do this for you. You can't do it on your own. You can't know His ways, unless He makes them known. You can't get to Him unless He shows you the way. You can't have life unless He enlivens you. You can't escape the lie unless He shows you the truth.

This is what the Triune God does for you. Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6) for "no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matthew 11:27). "No one comes to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

We don't like that. We like to be our own people, do things our way. We're always trying to put something back on us, some little thing we have to do. That's just the original sin, where we try to be like God. WE have to do something, even something really small, right?

No. Jesus is your Savior, sent from His Father to redeem you. The Spirit creates faith within you so that you would believe it. He creates this faith through the preaching of the Gospel and the delivery of the Sacraments. He makes you alive, even when you were dead in your trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2; Colossians 2). This happened through Holy Baptism. Jesus strengthens His new life within you through the forgiveness of sins in the Supper, for there He remains in you and you in Him. You will then bear much fruit and He will raise you up on the Last Day (John 6; John 15:54, 56). Through the preaching of His Word--Law and Gospel--the Spirit does this. In this way Jesus' Father is your vinedresser, in that "every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2).

We ask God to show us His paths, teach us His Law, work within us the cherishing and doing of His commandments because if He doesn't, we won't. But He does do it. He will do it. Repent of your trying to do it for Him. He will do it for you. You're baptized. Tomorrow you will receive all the more His working FOR YOU in the Absolution, the Word, the preaching, and the Supper of Jesus' Body and Blood, and then He will do all the more doing through you. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

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*Martin Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers taken from  
the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther.*

*Unless otherwise noted, Biblical quotations are from the ESV.*

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