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

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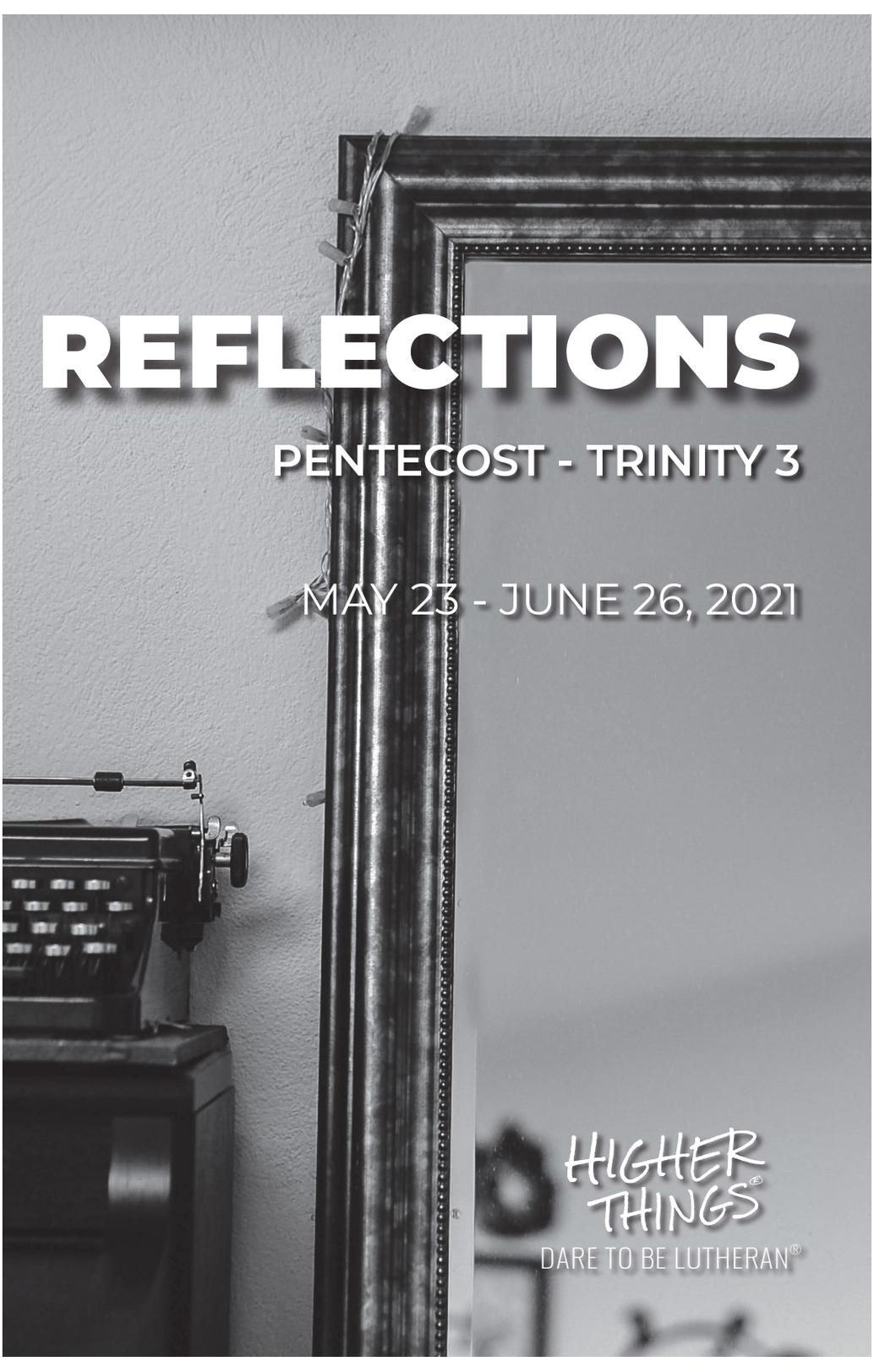
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REFLECTIONS

PENTECOST - TRINITY 3

MAY 23 - JUNE 26, 2021

HIGHER
THINGS®

DARE TO BE LUTHERAN®

*This season's Reflections were written by
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Saturday of the Third Week after Trinity

JUNE 26, 2021

Today's Reading: Introit for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity

(Psalm 27:3-4a, 5; antiphon: vs. 1-2)

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 1:1-18; Acts 8:1-25

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

(From the Introit for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The young man had been taught the faith from the Bible and the Small Catechism. He'd stood before the congregation and confessed that faith as his own. He was confirmed and this verse was given to him as a blessing: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)

God made a promise to the young man. He Himself would be the light that would guide him through the world. He would give salvation to the young man by grace through faith in Christ. He would be a stronghold of peace and wisdom and protection all his life.

And yet since that day the young man has never been in a church. It's sad that the promises he made were forgotten so easily.

But far sadder is that this verse, and the whole of Psalm 27, conveys a promise that God spoke to the young man which he has never valued. No one could ever buy the blessing which God rejoiced to give him freely in Christ. The comfort that comes from this promise could have been with the young man every day of his life. Every time he came to church to hear more of God's Word and partake of the Supper, he would have come to appreciate more and more the light of Christ and His salvation.

Lord, have mercy on him, and bring him back to the grace you gave him in Baptism and the promise he made in confirmation. Amen!

Why share his tale? Because it is the tale of so many people. Do not forget the promise you make in your confirmation. God remembers. The Church remembers. So should you. But most of all, do not abandon the light and salvation that God gives to you in Christ. Today is a day to remember the salvation of Christ. Don't let it go by. The Spirit calls you to repent and believe.

And to those who love a person who has forgotten their Savior: Don't give up hope. While there is yet breath, the Spirit calls to them to repent. Pray. Christ prays with you. All the Church does, too. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

(Your name), the almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given you the new birth of water and the Spirit and has forgiven you all your sins, strengthen you with His grace to life everlasting. Amen.

A Short Form for Daily Reflection

ADAPTED FROM LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

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.

Pentecost
MAY 23, 2021

Today's Reading: John 14:23-31

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 21:10-35; Luke 21:20-38

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

(John 14:27)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. A joyful and blessed Pentecost to you! Today we celebrate the day that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Church. We rejoice that He caused the Gospel to be preached--starting in Jerusalem and then to the ends of the earth--all the way to us in our day.

We have so much to be thankful for today! In John 14:27, Jesus gives His peace to the disciples. He goes to the Cross to make that peace possible. On Easter Sunday Jesus again says to them, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19), and peace is theirs by grace through faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit caused them to hear Jesus's words and believe that they truly had peace with God.

But this peace wasn't just spoken to them. It's also spoken to you and to all people. On Pentecost, we rejoice that this peace is here for you in Christ Jesus. Think of all the things the Spirit has done to make it possible for you to hear the Gospel!

He strengthened the apostles to preach Christ. He inspired them and the evangelists to write down what Jesus said and did. The Spirit oversaw the gathering together of all the books of the Bible. He made sure this Holy Word was protected and preached from generation to generation. He blessed the work of translating the Bible into different languages so that you could hear the Word and read it in your own language.

It's a miracle of the Holy Spirit that the words Jesus spoke are even available for you to hear. But the Spirit works another miracle. Through the Word He has created faith in your heart. Through the washing of Baptism, He has cleansed away your sin with the blood of Christ. It's a miracle that when you hear the words, "Peace be with you," you hear and believe that Jesus gives you peace this day. Apart from the Spirit, you could never believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him.

The Spirit has brought the Gospel to you and drawn you to faith in Christ by this Gospel. This is worth celebrating! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and ever-living God, You fulfilled your promise by sending the gift of the Holy Spirit to unite disciples of all nations in the cross and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. By the preaching of the Gospel spread this gift to the ends of the earth; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Collect for Pentecost)

Friday of the Third Week after Trinity
JUNE 25, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 31:10-31; John 21:1-25

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

(Proverbs 31:30)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The world has much to say to young people about who they are and what they should look for in life.

In recent years, this advice has gone from bad to awful. Our country has closed its eyes to the fact that God made human beings male and female, and that He gives a man and a woman into marriage. When these basic truths are lost, life gets harder for those who believe in Christ. How do we live in light of what is good when our society willingly calls good evil, and evil good?

Proverbs 31 speaks to us about what is true and valuable in life. The woman in this chapter is a believer in God. She's forgiven in Christ and He works in her to bear fruit in the good works she does for her family and neighbors.

The wife described here isn't saved because she rises early to work and cares for her household well. She's saved by God's grace. No woman does all these things all the time. But this chapter is of great value because it speaks honestly about the type of good works that are available to a married woman. She cares for her husband and children (if God gives them). She works diligently in whatever vocation she has. She cares for the poor, and she instructs others using words of wisdom and kindness.

A married life between a godly husband and wife is wise and beautiful. It provides tremendous opportunities to give and receive love. It helps protect you against the troubles of traveling through this sin-broken world. You'll rarely receive praise from the world for being a godly wife. But you will receive praise from the man whom you love and the children you share. Or you will receive praise from a wife who loves and values you as a husband.

Proverbs 31 doesn't promise you things will work out in the way it describes. Not everyone marries or has children. But it does guide you to be a woman (or a man!) who trusts in God for salvation and serves her family in love. If you don't marry and have children, you haven't failed. The Proverbs 31 woman had several vocations where she served others in love. Christ is always your Lord and He strengthens you in whichever way He provides. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Then here will I and mine today A solemn promise make and say: Though all the world forsake His Word, I and my house will serve the Lord!

("Oh Blest the House" LSB 862, st.5)

The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

JUNE 24, 2021

Today's Reading: Luke 1:57-80

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 30:1-9, 18-33; John 20:1-18

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways. (Luke 1:76)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Church has been celebrating the incarnation of Christ since the Gospel was first proclaimed (Genesis 3:15). After Adam and Eve sinned, God called them out of their hiding place of fear and shame. He promised to send a Messiah to rescue them from sin and death. The Seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

The promise of the Messiah is woven throughout the Old Testament, through the words of Moses and the prophets, and through the sacrifices and feasts the Jews were commanded to observe. Believers looked with hope and anticipation to the time when God would send the Christ.

And ever since Jesus won His victory on the Cross, the Church has continued to celebrate the mystery of the incarnation. All year long we find events that remind us that the Son of God became man. From the Annunciation, Visitation and Birth of John, to Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and the Presentation, Christ our incarnate Lord is proclaimed.

The mystery of the incarnation is so wonderful that we think about it all the time, just as our brothers and sisters did in the Old Testament. Today, we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist, and we rejoice that his entire life was spent pointing to the incarnate Lord.

When the angel Gabriel told Mary she would give birth to Jesus the Messiah, he told her that her aged cousin Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy. Mary went immediately to see her.

At the sound of her greeting, John the Baptist, yet in the womb, leapt for joy because his Messiah, Jesus, was present in Mary's womb (Luke 1:41-45). John believed in Jesus even before he was born, and proclaimed Him as Messiah even before he could speak.

He did this all his life. Through his preaching and baptizing he called people to repent and be ready for Jesus. He still speaks that message to us today. On his birthday, we hear his joyful call to repent and believe in Christ, the incarnate Son of God. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, through John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, You once proclaimed salvation. Now grant that we may know this salvation and serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Pentecost Monday

MAY 24, 2021

Today's Reading: John 3:16-21

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 22:1-20; Luke 22:1-23

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)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Yesterday we celebrated the Feast of Pentecost. Now, for two days after Pentecost, the Church focuses on readings that help us remember important things about the Holy Spirit and His work. The Gospel reading for Pentecost Monday is the much-loved Gospel proclamation from John 3. We hear anew that God the Father gave His only Son, Jesus, and that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Thanks be to God!

But did you notice something? In this reading, the Father and the Son are mentioned directly, but not the Holy Spirit. Is the Spirit missing in John 3:16? By no means! The Holy Spirit is here in this beautiful verse, because He and He alone is the One who creates faith in the heart of a believer. When it says, "... that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life," the Holy Spirit is right there. For only the Spirit can create this faith in a believer and keep it alive day in and day out until a believer is in heaven.

The Spirit is the One who inspired the apostle John to write these words of Jesus. The Spirit is the One who caused these words to be preached to all nations. And the Spirit is the One who led translators to provide these words of Christ in your language so you can read them and know accurately what Jesus said.

From the moment these words were spoken by Christ, the Spirit has been working to make sure that what He said would be brought to you (and to all the Church around the world), that these words would strengthen your faith and build you up in Christ. And He continues to do this work in you throughout your life. When you sit down in your old age to read John 3 once more, the Spirit will work through that Word yet again to build you up in Christ. As you hear Christ in this text you know your sins are forgiven and you have eternal life. It is the Spirit who brings this Word to you and causes you to believe it and who keeps that faith alive.

For all these things we give thanks to the Holy Spirit and praise Him for His work! We turn our attention where He directs us in this text, to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom the Father sent to save us. Thanks be to God! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

God would not have the sinner die; His Son with saving grace is nigh; His Spirit in the Word declares how we in Christ are heaven's heirs.

("God Loved the World So That He Gave" LSB 571, st.3)

Pentecost Tuesday

MAY 25, 2021

Today's Reading: John 10:1-10

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 22:21-23:3; Luke 22:24-46

"When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." (John 10:4,5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Today we continue our celebration of Pentecost as we hear that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Here is another reading for Pentecost that doesn't mention the Holy Spirit by Name, but still teaches us so much about His work.

In this text, Jesus teaches us that He is our Good Shepherd. He is risen from the dead and lives to guide His little flock, the Church, to heaven. He does this with His voice. Jesus speaks love and forgiveness to us in the Word of God as we read the Bible and hear the Gospel preached in Church. Jesus speaks love and forgiveness to us in Baptism and in the Supper--the Sacraments He established for us. We hear the voice of Christ in the catechism, as we are taught good doctrine from the Bible, so that we know how to avoid the voices of strangers (false teachers).

Jesus gives these gifts. At each step the Holy Spirit is the One who brings these gifts to you and causes you to believe in Jesus, so you receive His gifts by faith. Without the Holy Spirit, you would never have heard of Jesus, nor could you have believed in Him. You would have been lost forever.

But thanks be to God that the Spirit loves you and does His work! The Spirit brings the voice of Jesus to you through the Word and the Sacrament. The Spirit causes you to believe that when Jesus promises you forgiveness, it is truly yours. When you face times of trial and temptation, fear and doubt, the Spirit brings the peace and comfort of the Gospel to you and keeps you in Christ.

When you hear the voice of Christ say in the Scripture that you are His little lamb and you are safe with Him, it's the Spirit who causes you to trust that Jesus speaks the truth. The Spirit causes you to trust this Word of Christ so thoroughly that you base the safety of your whole life in this world and the next on Christ your Shepherd. The Spirit does this work with great strength, with tender gentleness, with patience and wisdom. He gives you the treasures that Christ won for you on the Cross and at the resurrection.

We thank the Holy Spirit for His gracious work, and praise Him with the Father and the Son, now and forever! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The King of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never; I nothing lack if I am His and He is mine forever.

("The King of Love My Shepherd Is" LSB 709, st.1)

Wednesday of the Third Week after Trinity

JUNE 23, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Lord's Prayer, First Petition

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 27:1-24; John 20:1-18

Hallowed be Thy name. What does this mean? God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also. How is God's name kept holy? God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!

(Small Catechism, Lord's Prayer, First Petition)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. If you could ask for anything in the world and be confident you would get it, what would it be? Before you answer, remember the old saying, "Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it." Receiving what you ask for can bring unintended consequences.

Thankfully, Jesus guides you in the Lord's Prayer to pray for the best things possible. In the First Petition, you begin by asking for God's Name to be holy. This might seem strange, since God's Name is always holy anyway. But you're asking that God's Name will be holy in your life, in your family, and congregation.

God makes His Name holy in you through His Word, the Bible. He causes you to hear it and understand it and believe it. He sends you pastors and teachers who explain it clearly. He gives you a good congregation in which to gather to hear Christ preached and to receive the Sacraments.

In this petition you ask that God's Word would be given to you in its truth and purity. You're asking that no false doctrines would be taught, so that no one is deceived. You're also asking that you, your family, and your congregation would hear the Word of God and follow it faithfully, living according to what God says.

And finally, you're also pleading that anyone who has fallen away from believing or living according to God's Word would be drawn to repent and believe again. And may the Gospel of Christ also reach those who have never heard the Word. Lord, have mercy!

"Hallowed be Thy name." Rejoice in the teaching of Jesus and ask for this petition first. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Your name be hallowed. Help us Lord, In purity to keep your Word, That to the glory of Your name We walk before You free from blame. Let no false teaching us pervert; All poor deluded souls convert.

("Our Father, Who from Heaven Above LSB" 766, st.2)

Tuesday of the Third Week after Trinity

JUNE 22, 2021

Today's Reading: 1 Peter 5:6-11

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 25:1-22; John 19:23-42

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Imagine you're on a nature hike. You're strolling down your favorite trail, taking in the sights and scents of nature. Suddenly you hear a loud ROAR down the path. You look up and see a lion prowling toward you. That would change your trek a bit, wouldn't it?

Peter compares Satan to a roaring lion, seeking prey to devour. His prey is a baptized child of God. He hunts with temptations to sin, lies about God's Word, and persecution from the world. A Christian walking through this world cannot ignore Satan's roaring threats any more than a hiker can ignore a lion on the trail.

When you were baptized into Christ, you were made God's child. You were marked by God as His own. He forgives your sins. He sends His angels to watch over you. You are redeemed by Christ the crucified.

And Satan hates all of that. He hates Christ. He hates you. As you go through this world, it is vital that you remember this. But Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows how to deal with a lion. Look to Him to keep you safe from harm.

First, be a humble sheep in His flock. Don't be proud and go running away from Him. Even when times are hard, follow where Jesus leads. He knows what He is doing.

Second, look to Him for all you need. As a sheep bleats when hungry or thirsty, you can bleat to Jesus, too. Tell Him your anxieties. Trust that He cares and can help. Thank Him for His mercy even before the help arrives.

Third, stay with the flock. You are not alone. The lion threatens all your brothers and sisters in Christ. You're all in this together. Together you hear God's Word, sing His praise, partake of the Supper, and help one another. You're much stronger when you go through trials with your church family.

God is faithful and He will strengthen you. His strength will be a blessing long after the hardships are over. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

I walk with Jesus all the way, His guidance never fails me; Within His wounds I find a stay when Satan's pow'r assails me; And by His footsteps led, My path I safely tread. No evil leads my soul astray; I walk with Jesus all the way.

("I Walk in Danger All the Way" LSB 716, s

Wednesday of the Week of Pentecost

MAY 26, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Creed, Second Article, pt. 3

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 23:4-28; Luke 22:47-71

...that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.
(Small Catechism: Apostles Creed, Second Article)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. These words in the catechism offer sweet comfort. They follow on what you read earlier in the explanation to the Second Article of the Creed. There you heard how Jesus is true God and true man. You heard that He redeemed you when you were lost in sin and condemned to death and damnation.

Jesus purchased and won you from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He paid the price to set you free from condemnation. Christ has defeated the deadly enemy, Satan--you are free from his tyranny. All this Jesus did at the cost of dying on the Cross, shedding His blood to rescue you.

He did this because He loves you. He wanted to make you His very own. He wanted you to have a life where you are protected and free to serve Him and others in His love. He rose from the dead so you will rise in Him. He lives forever so you will have eternal life. He reigns forever to be your King. He protects you from the evil in this world and brings you home to heaven. There are evil powers in this world. Satan is all too real. There are many people and institutions on earth that are influenced by him.

But Christ your Lord is King. When Satan or the world intends evil against you, He protects you. It doesn't mean that everything that happens to you will be good, but it does mean that the evil end that Satan intends for you is thwarted. Christ can take even that and turn it to good.

Stop for a moment and think about how amazing it is to be loved like that by God! How amazing that God would pay such a heavy price to rescue you in Christ. How amazing that He lives to watch over you, protect you, and give grace and peace to you--now and forever. You can know with absolute certainty that this is true, through God's promise in your Baptism and by His Word which is never broken.

Christ is your King. Let us pray together that the Spirit will draw more people into the Kingdom of Christ while there is still time. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, You have called Your Church to witness that in Christ You have reconciled us to Yourself. Grant that by Your Holy Spirit we may proclaim the good news of Your salvation so that all who hear it may receive the gift of salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday of the Week of Pentecost

MAY 27, 2021

Today's Reading: Acts 2:1-13

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 24:1-25; Luke 23:1-25

But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." (Acts 2:13)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Today, we hear the account of what happened on Pentecost. The believers were all together. The mighty rushing wind blew around them, and then tongues of flame appeared on the believers' heads as the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church and the disciples began to speak in tongues. This was not a language of babbling sounds. The apostles were given instant knowledge of complex human languages from all over the world--languages which they had never studied. Jerusalem was a big city, filled with people from all over the world who had gathered for the feast of Pentecost. So many were amazed to hear their native language in this city so far from home.

Even in the face of the glory of God in action, there are always some who mock. The Holy Spirit Himself is giving humble believers in Christ the ability to speak languages they've never heard! The crowds are hearing the very first sermons proclaiming the glorious resurrection of Christ! Yet some can only laugh and accuse them of drunkenness. Rather than repenting and believing the Gospel, they make a stupid joke and continue to live in darkness. If Satan could influence people to sneer on this glorious Pentecost day when the Holy Spirit was there in great power, then Satan can always find people to deride the Gospel whenever it is preached or shared. But what is that to us who are in Christ? Their impotent, hate-filled jests cannot stop the Gospel from giving life to all who believe, any more than a person can bring darkness into the world by poking fun at the sun.

This message--Christ crucified--has power. The Spirit uses it to create faith, give forgiveness, work peace, and rescue us from death and hell. God grant us courage to not fear little things like jibes and jests when we have the very Gospel of Christ to share. The apostles testified that day about the death and resurrection of Christ, which they witnessed. In that one day, their preaching brought 3,000 people out of death into life in Christ. We still have their testimony that Christ rose from the dead, and we still proclaim it. Nothing stops His power to save through the Gospel, especially not mockery. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Come Holy Ghost, God and Lord, With all your graces now outpoured On each believer's mind and heart; Your fervent love to them impart. Lord, by the brightness of Your light In holy faith Your Church unite; From every land and every tongue This to Your praise, O Lord, our God, be sung: Alleluia, alleluia!
("Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord," LSB 497, st.1)

Monday of the Third Week after Trinity

JUNE 21, 2021

Today's Reading: Micah 7:18-20

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 24:1-22; John 19:1-22

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. (Micah 7:18)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. God is a just Judge and a forgiving Savior. God created a perfect world, but that world rebelled and turned to sin. He watches over all people and all things. He works to keep order and peace in the world through His Law. He judges those who are wicked, because He is a holy God and will not abide evil. As we walk through this broken world and endure the sins others commit against us, we understand how vital it is that God is just. It would be awful to have a God who didn't care.

But God's justice is applied to all people equally. The just Judge applies the Law to all of us and we are found guilty. We have sinned against God and against our neighbor. For that we truly deserve both temporal death and eternal damnation.

But God doesn't want to punish people. He rejoices to give grace and forgiveness. You can hear that in our reading from Micah 7. Israel had sinned badly. They lied about God's Word. They stole from the poor. They truly deserved the punishment God gave them. But that would not be the end of the story.

God also gives forgiveness. "He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). God rejoices to give forgiveness! "He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love" (Micah 7:18b).

But how can God be both a just Judge who holds people accountable for sin, and a gracious Savior who forgives sins?

The answer is the Cross of Christ. Jesus willingly took the punishment for our sins. God's justice was fulfilled as Jesus died. But since Jesus had committed no sin, death could not hold Him once the punishment was finished. He rose again!

All who believe in Jesus are forgiven by grace. God has punished Christ for your sins so that He can graciously forgive your sins through faith in Christ. Who else is a God like this? In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Since Christ has full atonement made and brought to us salvation, Each Christian therefore may be glad and build on this foundation. Your grace alone, dear Lord, I plead, Your death is now my life indeed, For You have paid my ransom. ("Salvation unto Us Has Come" LSB 555, st.6)

The Third Sunday after Trinity

JUNE 20, 2021

Today's Reading: Luke 15: 1-10

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 22:22-23:12; John 18:15-20

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. There are two groups of people drawing near to Jesus. Jesus loves them both. The tax collectors and sinners (TC&S) have been alienated from God because of their sin but Jesus has called them. He has forgiven their sins and they rejoice in His grace.

The Pharisees and scribes (P&S) are also there. They love the Old Testament. They know that Jesus is a great teacher, but they don't understand that He is the Son of God, the Messiah promised in the Law and the prophets.

The P&S see Jesus eating with the TC&S. They fear that Jesus is condoning their sins. This fear makes them angry at Jesus.

But Jesus isn't condoning their actions. He's forgiving their sins. He will pay for them by dying on the Cross. Their sins will be cleansed by His blood--and so will the sins of the P&S. The death of Christ is the only source of forgiveness in the whole world, but thankfully, it's available to all!

Jesus wants the TC&S and the P&S to live together as one flock, one family in God. In these parables, He teaches them (and us) how to be one Church.

The TC&S are the lost sheep and the lost coin. Jesus is the One who searches for them. If He doesn't find them, they will perish. The driving force of each of these parables is the great desire of the person searching for the lost thing.

After the One who searches finds the missing treasure, He calls His friends and neighbors together. They're invited to rejoice with Him. But do they rejoice? The text doesn't give their response. Will the P&S join to celebrate with Jesus that He has found the people who were lost? Or will they stand in stony silence?

Dear friend, remember two things. One: Jesus rejoices that He has found you, and you are His through repentance and faith. Two: Jesus also rejoices over the other people whom He rescues. Join Him in His joy, no matter what sins you or they have done. What Christ washes away is cleansed in truth. Christ makes you all one holy Church! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus sinners doth receive; Oh, may all this saying ponder Who in sin's delusions live and from God and heaven wander! Here is hope for all who grieve: Jesus sinners doth receive. ("Jesus Sinners Doth Receive" LSB 609, st.1

Friday of the Week of Pentecost

MAY 28, 2021

Today's Reading: Genesis 11:1-9

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 27:12-23; Luke 23:26-56

Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth. (Genesis

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. As we continue to celebrate Pentecost, we rejoice that the Gospel of Christ Jesus has gone all around the world to all tribes, nations, peoples, and in many languages. Everywhere it has gone, the Spirit has blessed the preaching of Christ so that many people have believed and been saved. One of the beautiful things about the Christian Church is that there are people from every culture, every age, every stage of life--joined together as one in Christ.

Our lifestyles, cultures, and languages differ, but we are united together as one family in Christ. He has saved us all. He gives the same Baptism to us all. He gives the same forgiveness to us all. We all have the same hope, the same comfort, the same peace, the same love, the same grace, and the same Holy Bible that proclaims His victory over sin and death. And we will all rejoice together and praise His Name in the same heavenly kingdom.

Our reading today tells of a dark day in history. At one time people all had one language. They were united, but their goal wasn't to follow God. Instead, they wanted to make a name for themselves. They started by building a tower into the heavens, but it would have devolved into a truly destructive, organized wickedness. So God confused their language and scattered them over the face of the earth to limit their ability to unite around evil.

God didn't want us to be divided forever. He would come and unite us as one again, but not to serve the pursuit of power or the will of sinful man. We would be united by the One man who had never sinned--who came to serve and to give His life as a ransom. We would be united in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit brings the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in that man, Jesus. The Spirit has caused the Gospel to be preached to all the peoples who were scattered. In every land from every tribe, He has brought people to faith in Christ through that Gospel.

That Gospel comes to you, too! You have been baptized into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. You share this new birth with believers all around the world and across time. With them you thank God and praise His Name. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Send us Thy Spirit, teach us truth; Thou Son, O set us free From fancied wisdom, self-sought ways, to make us one in Thee.

("In Adam We Have All Been One" LSB 569, st.5

Saturday of the Week of Pentecost

MAY 29, 2021

Today's Reading: Introit for Holy Trinity

(Psalm 8:1-2a, 3-5; antiphon: Liturgical Text)

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 32:1-6, 16-27; Luke 24:1-27

Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.

(From the Introit for the Holy Trinity)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Introit for Trinity Sunday is based on Psalm 8. This psalm is pretty short and a good one to memorize. It gives you language to express humble awe at God's power in creation, and gratitude for His grace to save you in Christ.

How beautiful is this psalm? Think of it like this: If you were going to praise God for His glory and majesty, where would you begin? Most people would pick something big, mighty, and powerful. But David (who wrote the psalm) starts with a helpless baby who coos, laughs, and cries. Why a baby? Because a baby cannot do anything to protect himself, yet he exists. God made him and God protects him. Even when Satan, the great enemy, comes after the child, God protects him. .

But there's more! When people fell into sin they were condemned to death and damnation. God would not let this be! God alone created us, and God alone could save us--so He did. The Father sent His Son. Jesus is true God and true man! He came to save us and defeat the enemy and the avenger. Christ came as a baby. He was born a man, a little lower than the angels, yet still eternally God. The mere fact that the eternal Son of God could cry and laugh as a human baby gave glory to God!

And there's still more! Jesus won the fight against Satan when He died on the Cross. Risen from the dead, He gave us the gift of Baptism. The Holy Spirit brings this gift to us. We are baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We are born again as children of God, forgiven and at peace. We sing our praises to God as baptized children. Our songs glorify Him--His work of salvation has been accomplished and we are the living proof.

When we pray this psalm on Trinity Sunday, we join with believers around the world and in every age, praising the triune God! One God in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This God has created, redeemed, and sanctified us. Let us give glory to Him because He has shown His mercy to us! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Father most holy, merciful and tender; Jesus, our Savior, with the Father reigning; Spirit of comfort, advocate, defender, Light never waning.

("Father Most Holy" LSB 504, st.1)

Saturday of the Second Week after Trinity

JUNE 19, 2021

Today's Reading: Introit for the Third Sunday after Trinity

(Psalm 25:1-2a, 5b, 15, 20; antiphon: vs. 16, 18)

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 22:1-21; John 18:1-14

Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

(From the Introit for the Third Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. In our Gospel reading for this coming Sunday (Luke 15:1-10), we hear about how the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to hear Jesus. These were people who had done things that were truly wrong. They'd harmed people in their families, their community, and their congregations. They could not fix the hurt they had caused. People looked down on them because of the pain they'd caused.

But Jesus welcomed them. He forgave their sins and healed their shame. They had sinned, but Jesus had taken those sins away. They could trust Christ to be their strength and their comfort.

Our Introit for this coming Sunday is from Psalm 25. It describes faith in God from the perspective of one who depends on God to forgive his sins and heal his shame. It gives words so the heart can understand the kind of love that God alone can give.

God gives this welcoming love to you. This psalm is given to you so you can pray it back to God. Your heart cries out to Him, "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins" (Psalm 25:1,2a). Christ Jesus is the kind of Savior who hears you and turns to you in grace.

Jesus finds you lonely and afflicted and comforts you. He comes to you in your isolation when you've let down the people you love and let yourself down. He comes to you in the desolate place where your own thoughts about yourself are even more harsh than the things your worst enemies could say about you. He speaks another Word in that maelstrom of guilt and shame.

Jesus speaks peace. He speaks forgiveness. He speaks love. And what He speaks is truly yours. Christ alone has the power to give this to you. He is God Almighty. His love isn't yours on condition of doing better. It's not yours because you will try harder to be good. No. He just plain forgives you. He loves you. He brings peace to you. And no one else can. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed But yet in love He sought me And on His shoulder gently laid And home rejoicing brought me.

("The King of Love My Shepherd Is" LSB 709, st.3)

Friday of the Second Week after Trinity

JUNE 18, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 20:5-25; John 17:1-26

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. (Proverbs 9:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The world can be a confusing place for people of any age. You're introduced to opinions and ideas all the time. How can you evaluate them and embrace what is wise and reject what's wrong? How do you apply the wisdom of God to real life? The book of Proverbs is an ideal help--full of practical statements about how to live in a godly way. The more you ponder and remember them, the more the Holy Spirit uses them to guide you.

Look at our reading for today. There are 15 verses. They're short and to the point. Some speak to the same topic, like verses 10, 17, and 23. They teach you that God values honesty. He notices even small business transactions to make sure they are just, and because God values justice, you can look to Him when you're wronged.

Verses 18 and 25 teach you to contemplate what you should say so you don't speak rashly. Verse 13 teaches you to be diligent and work hard. Verse 19 warns you to watch out for people who repeat things that are told to them in confidence. If they tell you the secrets of others, they will tell other people your confidences, too.

Verse 20 tells you how much God pays attention to the Fourth Commandment. Honor your father and mother, that it may be well with you. Then it flips the coin to show you the other side. Those who curse their mother and father will have their lights snuffed out and be in darkness.

Verse 7 is related to that. A righteous man who walks in integrity passes a blessing on to his children. Give thanks to God for righteous parents who love God's Word. Strive to be a blessing to others as they have been to you.

But remember verse 9! No one can say that they have made their heart pure. No one can say they are clean from sin by their own deeds. Not you. Not your parents. Not your pastor or teacher. The most important wisdom is that Jesus forgives your sins by grace. We repent daily of our sins, daily He cleanses us, and daily He leads us in wisdom and love. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, without Your help our labor is useless, and without Your light our search is in vain. Invigorate our study of Your holy Word that, by due diligence and right discernment, we may establish ourselves and others in Your holy faith; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Holy Trinity

MAY 30, 2021

Today's Reading: John 3:1-17

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 35:9-30; Luke 24:28-53

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Nicodemus knew that Jesus was a teacher sent from God, but he wanted to learn more, so he came to Jesus at night. What he learned was greater than he could have imagined. For Jesus is not just a teacher sent from God. Jesus IS God. Nicodemus conversed with the very Son of God, who would teach him about the Holy Trinity. Nicodemus would never be the same. Jesus started by teaching about the Holy Spirit--the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. For Nicodemus to have eternal life in the Kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit must give him rebirth in Holy Baptism.

Nicodemus could not comprehend this, so Jesus explained more. During the Exodus, the Israelites complained against God, and God sent venomous snakes to bite them as a punishment (Numbers 21:4-9). In agony the people cried to God, who provided a way to be saved. Moses raised a bronze serpent on a pole in the middle of the camp, and all who had been bitten and looked at the serpent were healed.

Now in Nicodemus' time, the Son of Man (Jesus--the Second Person of the Holy Trinity) had come. People who have sinned against God and thus have earned death and damnation can look in faith to Jesus, lifted up on the Cross for their salvation. Whoever believes in Him is set free from the punishment for sin and has eternal life.

But Jesus had not come of His own accord. God the Father, the First Person of the Holy Trinity, had sent Him. God loved the world in this way--that He saved it at the cost of His only Son. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. This faith is worked by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Word and in Baptism.

The Father sent His Son to die and rise again. The Spirit joins you to the Son through Baptism into His death, so that you are reborn into His life (Romans 6). This is why we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Three Persons, yet one God. What Jesus taught Nicodemus, He also teaches to you. This eternal life is yours freely by grace, through faith in Christ Jesus. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, You have given us grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confession of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities; for You, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Holy Tri

Monday of Trinity Week

MAY 31, 2021

Today's Reading: Isaiah 6:1-7

Daily Lectionary: Ecclesiastes 8:1-17; John 9:1-23

*"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"
(Isaiah 6:3b)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Isaiah goes into the temple and sees the Lord God sitting on a throne. God is so glorious that even the train of His robe fills the huge building. John 12:41 tells us that Isaiah is seeing the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, before He became incarnate and was born of the Virgin Mary.

The LORD had always been present each time people came into the temple to worship, just as He had promised. But now Isaiah sees Him in His glory. He also sees and hears the holy angels praising God, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:3) From the days of the early Church, we have heard this as praising the Holy Trinity. The angels proclaim God is holy (singular) but say it three times, reflecting that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each holy.

And how does Isaiah respond to seeing the Lord in His glory? He says, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (6:5) When Isaiah sees God in glory, he is acutely aware of his own sin, so much so that he centers on the uncleanness of his lips. Every word he says, every breath, every bite of food, all of it is soiled with sin. He is also in the midst of people who are unclean in the same way. For his own sin and the sin of the people, Isaiah deserves to perish.

But God has come to save Isaiah, not to condemn him. An angel touches his lips with a coal from the altar and his sin is taken away. Isaiah can be in God's presence in peace.

When we come to church to hear the Word and receive the Sacraments, we also stand in the presence of God, though we cannot see Him. This is why we start our service confessing our sins like Isaiah did, and we hear God declare us forgiven. We, too, need our sin taken away. It's not done with a burning coal, but with the blood of Christ shed on the Cross. It touches our lips under the wine in the Supper and we are forgiven. By the blood of Christ, you have peace with God. You are cleansed to be His child by grace, forever. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea. Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!
(*"Holy, Holy, Holy"* LSB 507, st. 4)*

Thursday of the Second Week after Trinity

JUNE 17, 2021

Today's Reading: 1 John 3:13-18

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 17:1-28; John 16:17-33

*By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.
(1 John 3)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Today, the apostle John makes it clear that there are two groups of people in the world: those who hate their brother and those who love their brother. To which group do we belong?

We are those who have been loved by Christ Jesus. He rescued us from our sin, from the hatred we had shown against God and our neighbor. He has cleansed us in His blood and given us new life in Baptism. We are no longer children of the world. We are children of God (1 John 3:1). He then sends us out to love our brothers.

Sadly, the world is full of people who deny Christ and hate Him. As they hate Christ, they also hate those who are in Christ and part of the Church. Do not be surprised when the world hates you. This is the normal course of history.

Fear not, for you are in Christ, He goes with you through this sin-broken world. He looks after you. He sends His angels to protect you. And you are surrounded by your brothers and sisters in Christ who help you. Stay close to Christ and to your family in Christ in your congregation. This is especially important as the troubles in our world grow!

So how do we respond to the hatred of the world? Not in fear, for Christ is victorious. Not in hatred, for Christ loves and does not hate. Rather, we respond in love. We love our brothers and sisters in Christ and help one another. Sometimes we give help. Sometimes others help us. But our lives are marked by the love of Christ in deed and in truth.

We offer love to those outside the Church, too. Never underestimate the power of God's love when shared with someone who has only known the darkness of sin and death! Sometimes our love is rejected. Fear not! There's tremendous strength in giving love when you are hated.

Remember the power of prayer, as we ask God for justice and peace in the world (1 Timothy 2:1-4). The love of Christ gives great strength to the people of God. Sometimes we may forget that, but Christ will remind us of it, and it will be beautiful. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, grant us a steadfast faith in Jesus Christ, a cheerful hope in Your mercy, and a sincere love for You and one another; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday of the Second Week after Trinity

JUNE 16, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Lord's Prayer, Introduction

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 16:1-24; John 16:1-16

Our Father who art in heaven. What does this mean? With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

(Small Catechism, Lord's Prayer, Introduction)

In the Name ⋈ of Jesus. Amen. Imagine for a moment that you wanted to show tenderness to a little puppy you had adopted. What would you do? You'd stoop down to it. Pick it up gently. Hold it close to you. Speak softly to it and pet it. And you would do all of this over and over again, so this helpless creature would learn to trust you, to look to you for good, and to rejoice in your care.

How does God show you tenderness when He wants you to know that He is the One who has created you and cares for you? How does God show you tenderness when you have been adopted as His child in Baptism? How does God teach you to look to Him for good and to rejoice in His presence?

He teaches you this in the Lord's Prayer. Your Father tenderly invites you to believe that He is your true Father and that you are His true child, so that you may ask Him boldly for the things included in the Lord's Prayer, which encompasses all that you need for this daily life.

This prayer was given as a gift from God when you were baptized. Every time you pray it, you pray to your dear Father, along with Jesus, who taught it to you and prays with you, through the Spirit who draws you to faith.

You pray for the things Jesus taught you to ask. You ask for them from the Father who promised to give them. You receive them by the faith the Holy Spirit has worked in you.

Each time you pray this prayer, it's a miracle of the Holy Trinity into whom you have been baptized and by whom you have been saved. Your Father tenderly invites you to believe that you are His child by this new birth, so that you can come to Him with all the confidence of one who is saved by the grace of Christ. In the Name ⋈ of Jesus. Amen.

Our Father, who from heaven above bids all of us to live in love As members of one family and pray to You in unity, Teach us no thoughtless words to say but from our inmost hearts to pray.

("Our Father, Who from Heaven Above" LSB 766, st.1)

Justin, Martyr

JUNE 1, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Ecclesiastes 9:1-7; John 9:24-41

Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." (John 9:39)

In the Name ⋈ of Jesus. Amen. In John 9 we see a man with tremendous courage. He had been born blind, and Jesus had given him sight. It was such an amazing miracle that everyone was praising Jesus, which caused the Jewish leaders to bring the healed man before the synagogue. The man proclaimed boldly that Jesus had to be from God. For this confession of faith, he was kicked out of the synagogue and was made an outcast. The leaders of the synagogue wanted to condemn Christ by threatening those who believed in Him. This man knew that once he was blind but now could see. He would rather stay with the One who gave him sight than sit with the ones who preferred blindness.

Today the Church remembers Justin Martyr (100 – 165). Justin lived most of his life in spiritual blindness until he heard the Gospel and was drawn to faith in Christ. He was well-educated and used his gifts to defend the Christian faith and to teach others the truth. During a time of Roman persecution, he and six of his students were put on trial. They were told that if they sacrificed to the Roman gods, they could go free. Justin and his students refused because they would not worship another God. They trusted in Jesus alone, so all of them were beheaded.

Justin's witness of Christ has encouraged believers ever since. The Holy Spirit drew Justin to faith. When he was on trial, the Holy Spirit strengthened him and give him the words to say. What Jesus said in Mark 13:11 proved true: "And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit."

Jesus saved the blind man and He saved Justin. The Holy Spirit gave courage to them both when they needed it. Jesus saved you and He promises to give you courage in need. We thank God that He was there for both of these men. We also thank Him that He is there for us, building us up in faith through His Word. He will give you the strength you need for each day. No matter what comes, God is faithful. You can trust Him. In the Name ⋈ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, You found Your martyr Justin wandering from teacher to teacher, searching for the true God. Grant that all who seek for a deeper knowledge of the sublime wisdom of Your eternal Word may be found by You, who sent Your Son to seek and to save the Lost; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday of Trinity Week

JUNE 2, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Apostles Creed, Third Article, part 1
Daily Lectionary: Ecclesiastes 10:1-20; John 10:1-21

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.
(*Small Catechism: Apostles Creed, Third Ar*)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Our focus today is this section from the Small Catechism which teaches you about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who drew you to faith through the Gospel and He is the One who keeps you in the true faith all your life.

In John 10:16 Jesus says, "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."

You are one of those sheep. Jesus is talking about you. He brought you into His flock, the Church, through faith. The Holy Spirit worked this faith in you through the Word of Christ.

The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle John to write the Gospel named after him. The Spirit caused these words of Jesus to survive through the centuries until you could hear and read them. The Spirit guarded this message as it was preached from generation to generation. The Spirit made sure that this Word was written, translated, printed, and proclaimed to all nations, keeping the Gospel alive in the Church. And now the Holy Spirit brings this message to you.

Jesus is not just a Good Shepherd a long time ago. He is not just a Good Shepherd to other people. Jesus is your Good Shepherd. The Spirit causes you to know and believe that when Jesus says He loves you and forgives you, this is the truth.

The Spirit brings you into the fold and makes you listen to your Good Shepherd's voice--so that you trust that your Savior who died for you and rose from the dead for you will also lead you through this world and bring you all the way home to heaven. Thanks be to God! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"Come, holy Light, guide divine, now cause the Word of life to shine. Teach us to know our God aright, and call Him Father with delight. From every error keep us free; Let none but Christ our master be That we in living faith abide, in Him, our Lord, with all our might confide. Alleluia, alleluia!

(*Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord LSB 497, st.2*)

Tuesday of the Second Week after Trinity

JUNE 15, 2021

Today's Reading: Proverbs 9:1-10
Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 15:1-29; John 15:12-27

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
(*Proverbs 9:*)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The time we live in is filled with many confused people who think they are wise, but are not. The prevailing wisdom of our age is to reject the clear teaching of the Bible about what is true and false, right and wrong. Those who have rejected God's Word and His ways cry aloud to people to follow after them on the path they have chosen. You can hear their siren call in the government, schools, and streets. It's in much of the media and all over the internet.

How can a young person today distinguish what is actually wise when there are so many voices shouting their own brand of "wisdom"? The book of Proverbs is a good place to start. It's filled with Holy Spirit-inspired wisdom regarding how to walk in a good way through this mixed up world.

In Proverbs 9:1-12, you hear Wisdom calling out to you to hear her teaching and fear the LORD. She tells you the good you will get from her: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it" (Proverbs 9:10-12).

In Proverbs 9:13-18 you hear a different voice: Folly calls out to you. She entices you to a life of sin that sounds sweet but leads to death. She calls you to forget God and come to her feast of pleasure. But the guests at her feast are already dead--they just don't know it yet.

Proverbs is an exceptionally good book to read regularly. It calls you to fear the LORD. To respect that He is God and He is a just judge. To trust that He is merciful to forgive all who repent and trust in Christ Jesus for forgiveness. Proverbs teaches you to reject the dangerous things of this world that lead to death, and to trust in God, who leads you to life everlasting. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Wisdom's highest, noblest treasure, Jesus, is revealed in You. Let me find in You my pleasure, and my wayward will subdue. Humility there and simplicity reigning, in paths of true wisdom my steps ever training. If I learn from Jesus this knowledge divine, the blessing of heavenly wisdom is mine.

(*"One Thing's Needful" LSB 536, st.3*)

Elisha

JUNE 14, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 14:1-27; John 15:1-11

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so."
(2 Kings 2:9-10)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. In 2 Kings 2:1-14 we read how the LORD took the prophet Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, accompanied by a fiery chariot. Elisha had been his assistant for many years. Before Elijah was taken up, Elisha asked for a double portion of the Holy Spirit, who had been with Elijah during his ministry. God gave that to Elisha, and he went on to serve as a prophet for many years. The courage and wisdom he had to do the work God gave him to do was there because of the Spirit.

The blessing given to Elisha reminds us of Ascension Day, when the apostles watched Jesus ascend into heaven. Ten days later the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Church to empower the apostles to be witnesses for Christ. The Gospel was preached and faith was created. People were called to repentance and were reborn in Holy Baptism. The Spirit caused the Gospel to spread, and He is still doing that today through the same Word and Sacraments.

So as we hear about Elisha, and the strength the Spirit gave to him, we also thank God for the Spirit given to us in the Word and in Baptism. That same Spirit brought us to Christ and keeps us in Christ. He comforts us with the Gospel so that we learn what Christ taught and come to trust in Him. He strengthens us to serve others in the love of Christ, doing the vocations we are given in this world.

Thanks be to God for the work the Spirit did in and through the prophet Elisha. Thanks be to God for the gracious work the Spirit does to bring us to Christ and keep us in Him always. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord God, heavenly Father, through the prophet Elisha, You continued the prophetic pattern of teaching Your people the true faith and demonstrating through miracles Your presence in creation to heal it of its brokenness. Grant that Your Church may see in Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the final end-times prophet whose teaching and miracles continue in Your Church through the healing medicine of the Gospel and the Sacraments; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Thursday of Trinity Week

JUNE 3, 2021

Today's Reading: Acts 2:1-13

Daily Lectionary: Ecclesiastes 11:1-10; John 10:22-42

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

(Romans 11:33)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Romans gives a beautiful explanation of how God saves sinful man through His Son, Jesus Christ. Make it a regular read throughout your life. You'll always find a richer and deeper understanding of your faith. The call to repent of sin is so strong, but the grace of God in Christ Jesus is even stronger, speaking forgiveness to you.

In Romans, Paul shows you that you have no power to conquer sin through your works, but that God in His wisdom and power defeated sin to save you.

Romans demonstrates the depth of Christ's love in that He died on the Cross to redeem you. It teaches you the power of forgiveness and love as you are baptized into the death of Christ. It proclaims God's love in Christ for both Jews and Gentiles. This is a beautiful book. Every time you read it, you grow in appreciation that the almighty God has such power to save you.

Could you possibly measure the riches of salvation God has for you in Christ? Could you count the blessings God has given you in creating you? Could you quantify the depth of love He has toward you that He rescued you from sin and death to bring you to heaven?

All of time is an ongoing story of God's love--how He created you, redeemed you, and keeps you in faith in Christ through the Gospel. All of eternity is marked by the glory of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Romans reveals this glory, telling how the Holy Trinity works so completely to save you and keep you in the faith.

When we look not at the glory of God's creation, but also at the problems that sin brings into this world, who can figure out a solution? God can. God's answer is the Cross of Christ--the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." (Romans 1:16a). He has worked this blessing, He has given it to you, and He will bring you home. Glory be to God! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Holy Father, holy Son, Holy Spirit, three we name Thee; Though in essence only one, undivided God we claim Thee And, adoring, bend the knee while we own the mystery.
(*"Holy God, We Praise Thy Name" LSB 940, st. 5*)

Friday of Trinity Week

JUNE 4, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Ecclesiastes 12:1-14; John 11:1-16

*Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them."
(Ecclesiastes 12:1)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. God gave King Solomon special wisdom from God so that he could be a good king over Israel (See 1 Kings 3). You hear powerful wisdom from Solomon in our reading today from Ecclesiastes 12, but it's not easy to hear. He describes the dark days that come to a person and their family when they are about to die. It's a stark reading.

So why read it? Because death is a reality and it comes to all people. People who live their lives trying to ignore the end of life get lost in vanity. But is it wise to think only of death, since life is temporary? Definitely not!

Solomon teaches us that we should honor life! But how? By remembering the Creator of life. The only way to handle the challenges of this world is to be close to our Creator who gives us life. He keeps us safe from death so that we can receive with thanksgiving the good that He gives each day.

When do you start remembering and honoring your Creator? While you are still young, so that your years are marked by thankfulness as you receive His gifts.

How do you remember your Creator? Luther gives you a simple way in the Small Catechism, where he explains the Apostles Creed, the path of baptismal life in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

This is the path of wisdom. The articles of the Apostles Creed teach you about the Father who created you, the Son who rescued you from sin and death on the Cross, and the Holy Spirit who brings you to faith in Christ and gives you peace with the Father.

This is the life of Baptism into Christ. When you remember your Creator in your youth, you're remembering you are baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. God has made you His own child in Baptism. This baptismal life is not vain or futile like the lives King Solomon decries, but it is a life of peace in Christ now and forever. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless; Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness. Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory? I triumph still if Thou abide with me!
(“Abide With Me” LSB 878, st.)*

The Second Sunday after Trinity

JUNE 13, 2021

Today's Reading: Luke 14:15-24

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 13:1-25; John 14:18-31

*When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"
(Luke 14:15)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The LORD is our God who has created us. He provides all that we need to support this body and life--in the Lord's Prayer, we call this "our daily bread."

The LORD our God redeemed us from sin and death. Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:51).

We need our daily bread in order to survive physically in this world. We need Christ, the Living Bread, to have peace with God in this world and eternal life in the next.

In the Lord's Supper, our daily bread and the Living Bread come to us at the same moment. Jesus gave us the Sacrament so that we eat and drink His Body and Blood under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of our sins.

This feast lasts forever. Christ gives it to His Church, and by His grace we will partake with Him at the marriage feast of the Lamb, which will never end (Revelation 19:9). Who could possibly number the blessings God gives us in the Lord's Supper?

A person at the table in our reading today said, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" But Jesus responded with a warning we all need to hear. Most people in this world will reject the invitation to eat bread in the kingdom of God because they are too concerned about their lives in this world.

People give excuses why they won't come to church or partake of the Supper. The things that distract them aren't bad, but they have made them more important than God, and that is bad. They forfeit a relationship with God, the giver of all good things. They don't care about the Giver, but they only want the gifts. So many people leave the best gift God gives on the table. Lord, keep us in your grace and call back to your feast those who have wandered. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, since You never fail to help and govern those whom You nurture in Your steadfast fear and love, work in us a perpetual fear and love of Your holy name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Saturday of the First Week after Trinity

JUNE 12, 2021

Today's Reading: Introit for the Second Sunday after Trinity
(Psalm 18:1-2a, 27, 30a, 49; antiphon: vs. 18b-19)

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 10:1-23; John 14:1-17

The Lord was my support in the day of my calamity. He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.

(From the Introit for the Second Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Our Introit for the Second Sunday after Trinity comes from Psalm 18. It is a long psalm, so the Introit makes it accessible for the worship service, but do yourself a favor and read the psalm in its entirety. David wrote most of the psalms. This psalm was so important to him that it is also found in 2 Samuel 22. David celebrates here that God rescued him from the hand of Saul and from all his enemies.

Over the years David had many enemies. Think about it this way: How many people in the world do you know who have been attacked by a bear? How about a lion? How about a 9-foot-tall highly trained, magnificently equipped, enraged warrior? How about an army of thousands of his friends? How about a king who is consumed with jealousy? And his whole army?

But David was safe through all these attacks and more. He says, "The Lord was my support in the day of my calamity. He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me" (Psalm 18:18b-19).

This psalm is a beautiful one to read well and often because it gives you words to express thankfulness to God. You probably have never been attacked by a lion, a giant, or a king and his army. But this psalm still applies to you because it also speaks about Christ Jesus, and you are baptized into Him

David was the King of Israel, but so is Jesus. Christ came as the descendant of David, and He is enthroned forever. He is the King of the Jews who was falsely accused by powerful enemies and then hung upon the Cross. He defeated one who is greater than Goliath, when He crushed the serpent's head upon the Cross. He burst out of the tomb on Easter, never to die again. And He brings us with Him from death to life.

In this psalm you join with David in praising the LORD as you thank Jesus for His victory that saves you. And you also thank Jesus, your Good Shepherd, that He protects you on the way through this hard world. Thanks be to God! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

In God, my faithful God, I trust when dark my road; Great woes may overtake me, yet He will not forsake me. My troubles He can alter; His hand lets nothing falter.
("In God, My Faithful God" LSB 745, st.1)

Saturday of Trinity Week

JUNE 5, 2021

Today's Reading: Introit for the First Sunday after Trinity
(Psalm 13:1-4; antiphon: vs. 5-6)

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 1:8-33; John 11:17-37

[O Lord,] I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

(Psalm 13:5,6)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Psalm 13 was written by David during a time of suffering, likely while he had to flee for his life from King Saul. He spent years in hiding and was at times a hair's breadth away from death. At times David got weary. At times he felt forgotten. At times he cried out to God in frustration, as he does in this psalm. He pours out the anguish of his heart before God. But note how the psalm ends.

David confesses his faith. "I have trusted in Your steadfast love..." All his life, David counted on the fact that God's love is strong and never fails. He knows that despite the trouble he endures, God's love has not changed. "My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation..." David is confident that God will save him from Saul. He's also sure that God will save him from his sins and give him eternal life. He waits with confidence for that salvation.

And then we read something amazing: "I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me."

David's troubles are still there, but in faith he proclaims that God is already good to him. David praises God, trusting His mercy, even before he sees the answer to his prayers.

We can relate to the type of trouble and frustration that David expresses. We learn from this psalm to trust the Lord's promises in Christ even while we are in the midst of trouble. God's eternal faithfulness was shown when Christ died and rose for us. He washed us into that death and resurrection of Christ in Baptism. As the Father was faithful to raise Christ from the dead, so He is faithful to raise those who are joined to Christ in Baptism.

The troubles of life come and go, but the love of God to us in Christ Jesus is forever. Sing this psalm with David and with all the Church, because God has dealt bountifully with us in Christ. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, because of Your tender love toward us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may remain steadfast in this faith to the end and finally come to life everlasting; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The First Sunday after Trinity

JUNE 6, 2021

Today's Reading: Luke 16:19-31

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 3:5-24; John 11:38-57

*...“If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”
(Luke 16:31b)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Today, we meet Lazarus. He has the distinction of being the only character in Jesus' parables to be given a name. Lazarus means, "One whom God helps."

Every day, Lazarus' friends lay him outside the gate of a rich man so that he might receive scraps from the rich man's table. God intended to help Lazarus through the compassion of the rich man. The bounty given to the rich man should be shared in mercy with Lazarus, and God would bless both of them. But the rich man closed his heart toward Lazarus. Instead of helping him, he left Lazarus to suffer in hunger and illness, poverty and shame.

Soon, both die. God lives up to the promise in Lazarus' name. The angels carry Lazarus away from the sorrows of this world to the peace of eternal life. The rich man is sent to hell. His lack of faith in God and lack of repentance for his sins lead him to eternal punishment. Even in hell he still has no respect for Lazarus. He suggests that God send Lazarus down to the fires of hell for the miniscule comfort of a drop of water on his tongue.

God would have none of it. God gave these good things to Lazarus and they will never be taken away. The rich man begs God to send Lazarus to his brothers to warn them that they too will be damned if they don't repent. But God has given them mercy already! Moses and the prophets call them to repent and believe. If they will not hear them, why would they believe if someone (Jesus!) were to rise from the dead?

In Baptism we are all Lazarus--one whom God helps! Jesus teaches us that the Church is a place of mercy. God has mercy on us in Christ Jesus. And because God has had mercy on us, we should show His love by serving our neighbor.

We gather together and hear Moses and the prophets, Jesus and His apostles. Through their words the Holy Spirit brings us to repent and believe so that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. All glory be to Him! Amen! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

“Come unto Me, ye weary, and I will give you rest.” O blessed voice of Jesus, which comes to hearts oppressed! It tells of benediction, or pardon, grace and peace, Of joy that has no ending, or love that cannot cease.

(“Come unto Me, Ye Weary” LSB 684, st.1)

St. Barnabas, Apostle

JUNE 11, 2021

Today's Reading: Mark 6:7-13

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 9:1-18; John 13:21-28

Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:36-37)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Today we thank God for redeeming Barnabas by grace through faith in Christ! We praise God for all that He worked through Barnabas for the good of the Church. Barnabas teaches us to be strong in the Gospel and active in charity.

Barnabas trusted in Christ. The apostles gave him the name Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement." He was generous with his gifts and used them to encourage others, as he did here, selling his field and giving the money to the apostles to support the work of the Gospel.

Barnabas was bold. After Saul (also known as St. Paul) was converted to Christ, he came to Jerusalem to see the apostles. They refused to see him because they thought it might be a trap. But Barnabas brought Saul to them, and they learned they could trust Saul.

When the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles in Antioch, the Church chose to send Barnabas to build up the new believers in Christ. Barnabas was known to all as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." He exhorted the new believers to be faithful to the Lord Jesus and not to abandon their faith when things got hard.

Barnabas went to Tarsus so that he could bring Paul to Antioch, where they continued preaching and preparing for their missionary journeys (Acts 11:23-26). Think of how important it has been for the Church through the ages that Barnabas sought out Paul and supported him!

May God bless the Church today with believers like Barnabas who encourage others in Christ, love the Word of God, and give charity to support the work of the Gospel! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, Your faithful servant Barnabas sought not his own renown but gave generously of his life and substance for the encouragement of the apostles and their ministry. Grant that we may follow his example in lives given to charity and the proclamation of the Gospel; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Thursday of the First Week after Trinity

JUNE 10, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 8:22-36; John 13:1-20

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. (John 13:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Jesus was about to go out to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He would be arrested. Then He would be tortured, falsely tried, and crucified. But before He went out to be the sacrifice for our sins, He got up from His dinner and girded Himself to wash the disciples' feet. One by one He cleansed them and taught them that as He has served them, so they ought to serve one another.

Only the next day, Christ would be taken down from the Cross and prepared for burial. His body (and feet) were coated with the blood that poured from His many wounds. As His followers prepared His body with spices, they also gently would have cleansed away the blood that had caked around His feet. They washed the feet of the One who had washed them. From His nail-pierced feet, they tenderly cleansed away the very blood that cleanses us from our sins.

Christ doesn't kneel before us and wash our feet as He did that night, but we have been washed in the blood that poured from His wounds, dripped down His body, and dried on His skin. That blood has washed us in our Baptism. In those waters, the Spirit washed us in Christ, joined us to His death, and we now live in peace with the Father.

We bear the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are justified by His grace and adopted into His family, the Church. And in this holy Church, you turn to your neighbor. In your neighbor, you see someone else cleansed by Christ--another person loved by the same Savior who has loved you. You see your neighbor in need. In need of love and compassion and service in any of the thousands of ways that life brings.

And now you understand the point of Christ washing the disciple's feet. Jesus serves you. Jesus serves your neighbor. Jesus invites you to serve them along with Him. Don't consider it beneath you to serve your neighbor. Instead, treasure the incredible lifelong honor of serving alongside Christ. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus took the role of servant when upon that gruesome span, For all human sin He suffered as a vile and loathsome man; On the cross poured out like water to fulfill the Father's plan. ("Jesus, Greatest at the Table" LSB 446, st.3)

Monday of the First Week after Trinity

JUNE 7, 2021

Today's Reading: Genesis 15:1-6

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 4:1-27; John 12:1-19

And (the LORD) brought (Abram) outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:5,6)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. When Abram was 75 and his wife Sarai was 65, the LORD spoke to him and said, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3).

Abram believed God told the truth and he obeyed. They left their home and settled in Canaan, waiting on the LORD to fulfill His promise. They waited. And waited. Abraham was 100 when Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Decades after the initial promise, God shows Abram the stars of heaven and says his descendants will outnumber them... and Abram still believed God.

Paul describes Abraham's faith in Romans 4: "In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, 'So shall your offspring be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead... or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness'" (Romans 4:18-22).

Faith doesn't just save Abraham. It saves all who believe in Christ. Paul continues, "But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for Abraham's sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:23-25). In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The whole triumphant host give thanks to God on high. "Hail, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!" They ever cry. Hail Abraham's God and mine! I join the heavenly lays: All might and majesty are Thine and endless praise! ("The God of Abraham Praise" LSB 798, st.

Tuesday of the First Week after Trinity

JUNE 8, 2021

Today's Reading: 1 John 4:16-21

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 5:1-23; John 12:20-36a

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

(1 John 4:

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Faith is not easy. It can be hard to believe that God loves us as much as He does, because we know all the ways that we have sinned against God, against other people, and even against ourselves. We know we deserve punishment from God, yet He comes to us in love and saves us.

1 John 4 is a beautiful chapter because it tells us how God gives us His love in Christ. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:9-11).

Love starts with God because He is love. He made His love clearly manifest to you by sending His Son Jesus. He has brought you to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that you may have life in Him. Jesus is the propitiation for your sins. He is the sacrifice that takes your sins away, so you have peace with God.

It can be hard to believe that God loves you this much. But God is persistent! He strengthens you in faith through His Word, in your Baptism, and at the Supper. The Holy Spirit works through all these things to bring you the love the Father has given you in Christ Jesus.

This is why we love others. This is why hating someone is not an option. Christ loves you and He loves the person you hate. He wants them to repent and be saved. Would you dare ask Him to stop loving them and to join you in hating them? God is love. He won't do that. He won't join you in hate. Instead, He brings you into His love.

At times, it's hard to love others. Sometimes certain relationships aren't safe. Turn to Christ. He forgives you. Ask Him to help you forgive. He is the Lord of love. You can trust Him to help. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, grant us a steadfast love in Jesus Christ, a cheerful hope in Your mercy, and a sincere love for You and one another; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday of the First Week after Trinity

JUNE 9, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Creed, Third Article, part 2

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 8:1-21; John 12:36b-50

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise up me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

(Small Catechism, Apostles Creed, Third Article)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. John 12 is a helpful reading for our devotion today as we look at the explanation of the Third Article of the Creed. Jesus is reaching the end of His public ministry. He's taught for three years, performing miracles and signs that clearly show He is the Messiah. The Spirit has worked through His teaching to draw many to faith.

Whenever the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit accompanies it with power to draw people to faith in Christ and give them salvation. The Spirit calls people to faith, forgives their sins, enlightens them to understand the Gospel, and sanctifies them as they walk with Christ.

But whenever Jesus taught or did miracles, some people hardened their hearts and refused to believe in Him. The Spirit brought the light of Christ to them, but they loved the darkness, so they were left in their blindness. This is a good warning to us all. Let us not despise the gifts of Christ!

Thanks be to God that the gifts of Christ are still here for us all. The Word is here before you now. The Word will be proclaimed this Sunday. The forgiveness of sins is yours in Christ Jesus through the Means of Grace (the Word, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion). You can trust that He saves you by His grace. The Spirit who has drawn you to faith keeps you in the faith and showers upon you the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ.

The Spirit does this all your life. He is faithful to keep you in faith until you are home in heaven. And on the Last Day, when Christ comes again, the Spirit who has given you life in Christ will raise you from the dead. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast, Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host, Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: Alleluia! Alleluia!
("For All the Saints" LSB 677,