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

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# REFLECTIONS

TRINITY 21 TO  
END OF THE CHURCH YEAR

OCTOBER 24 -  
NOVEMBER 27, 2021

HIGHER  
THINGS<sup>®</sup>

DARE TO BE LUTHERAN<sup>®</sup>

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## Saturday of the Last Week

### NOVEMBER 27, 2021

**Today's Reading:** Introit for the First Sunday in Advent  
(Psalm 25:4-5, 21-22; antiphon: v.1-3a)  
**Daily Lectionary:** Isaiah 1:1-28; 1 Peter 1:1-12

*To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame. (From the Introit for the First Sunday in Advent)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Like the Last Sundays of the Church Year, the season of Advent provides time for us to be trained in patient waiting. The Sundays just past taught us to patiently wait for the return of Jesus in glory. The Sundays of Advent will teach us to patiently wait for the Incarnation of Jesus.

This time of waiting is characterized by increased devotion to the hearing of God's Word and to prayer. And in that hearing and praying our trust in the Lord is renewed. We lift up our souls to God, our only confidence, for we have no trust in anyone else. He is our only hope and salvation. We may have many enemies--the world and the devil himself, and even our own flesh--but they will never exalt over us because God is with us in the flesh of Jesus. Those who give in to the enemies, who abandon trust in God will not succeed. They will be ashamed. God spare us from such foolishness!

In Christ, we wait on the Lord and trust in Him, and not in ourselves, so we will never be ashamed. We trust in the Lord, so we cling to His Word and hear what He has to say. He shows us His commandments, the way to live, and greater still that He sent His Son to take our human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. In that flesh He would bear our sins to death on the Cross in order to remove our shame and silence our enemies. In faith we wait for the Lord. We trust in God for salvation all the more.

The Lord is truly good to sinners like us. He instructs and leads us throughout our lives by His Word. Despite the attacks of enemies without and within, God leads us in His paths of love and faithfulness. He promises never to abandon us, but to be with us always, even to the very end of the world. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. 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.*

## The 21st Sunday after Trinity

OCTOBER 24, 2021

**Today's Reading:** John 4:46-54

**Daily Lectionary:** Deuteronomy 25:17-26:19; Matthew 17:1-13

*Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.* (John 4:50)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Two miracles occur in the reading for today. The first is obvious: The son of an official is brought from the point of death by the Word of Jesus. The second miracle is seen by faith: A fearful father is rescued from his faithlessness. I'm sure the father of the dying boy didn't think much about his wobbly faith as he approached Jesus that day in Capernaum. He had faith enough to come to Jesus, yet he believed that Jesus could not heal his son without being physically present for him. Jesus sets him straight with a promise that only He can make: "Go; your son will live." With that promise echoing in his ears, the anxious and faithful father heads for home. On the journey home he hears the great news that his son is recovering. His trust in Jesus was confirmed and he and his whole household believed.

The connection for us is clear. Jesus receives us gladly, even with our wobbly faith. We come to Him asking for humanly impossible things with the confidence that the One who can change water into wine and bring a young man back from the brink of death can rescue us. We have God's promise. Jesus said, "I am the living bread that comes 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 feast on Jesus by faith. We trust His Word when He says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

We feast on the Bread of Life each time we come to the altar and receive the very Body and Blood of Jesus in the Holy Supper. In the Supper Jesus grants us the forgiveness that delivers us from death. With His Body and Blood He says to you, "Go: You, son or daughter, will live." In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O Lord, keep your household, the Church, in continual godliness that through your protection she may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve You in good works; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

*(Collect for the 21st Sunday after Trinity)*

## Friday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 26, 2021

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

*No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.* (Revelation 22:3-5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. See the Tree of Life growing in the heavenly city along that river and the golden street? Life in all its fullness is pictured with the twelve-fold fruit the Tree produces each month the year around. Even its leaves are filled with healing. "No longer will there be anything accursed" (Revelation 22:3).

This takes us back to the radiant pureness of the Garden of Eden, the first Paradise. Genesis 2 describes the river that watered it. And in its midst was the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Through Satan's deception and Adam and Eve's sin, the curse of death came into the world. Our first parents rebelled against God's love and ate from the forbidden tree. Death reigned and that curse was passed down to all humanity. For everyone who does not continually do everything written in the Law is cursed.

But on another tree many centuries later, the Son of God hung nailed to the Cross. He became the curse in our place. And by His death, He undid the curse of Adam's sin. The Scripture declares in Galatians 3, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'" (Galatians 3:13). "No longer will there be any curse," God declares.

The blood of the Lamb that stained the tree of the Cross removes sin's curse. You have been washed clean and made ready to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life in Paradise restored. Death is undone. Life flows from the throne of the Lamb. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Now from the tree of Jesus' shame Flows life eternal in His name; For all who trust and will believe, Salvation's living fruit receive. And of this fruit so pure and sweet The Lord invites the world to eat, To find within this cross of wood The tree of life with ev'ry good.* ("The Tree of Life" LSB 561, st. 4)



## Thursday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 25, 2021

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

*Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."*  
(Revelation 21:9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. To the world and our faithless eyes, the Church often looks like a hot mess. From our view She is not much of a Bride, but more like a schizophrenic bag lady on a city street. But that is not how God sees His Bride, the Church. She is spotless and radiant, having been washed by water with the Word (Ephesians 5:26). That's the view that John received in the Revelation and that he shares with us. The Bride, the Lamb, the new Jerusalem, are all revealed together as one glorious reality.

The wondrous news is that the vision also describes our future. The Lamb is Jesus who was slain for our sins and the sins of all the world. The new Jerusalem is our eternal dwelling place. But how can we be sure of all this? Because God says so. You can count on His Word. Earlier in the vision, John heard these words: "'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also, he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment'" (Revelation 21:5-6). It's all a gift, God's free gift to you.

You are a member of the Bride of Christ. You have been washed clean by the water and the Word. Are you thirsty? Drink up. Drink from the spring of life-giving water that He offers you free of charge. Come to the Supper of the Lamb and feast on Christ's own Body given and Blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. The world may continue to mock the Bride, but we rejoice in Her and give thanks that God, in Christ, has counted us worthy to be one with Her. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O Bride of Christ, rejoice; Exultant raise your voice To hail the day of glory  
Foretold in sacred story. Hosanna, praise and glory! Our King, we bow before  
thee.*  
(*"O Bride of Christ, Rejoice"* LSB 335, st.1)

## Monday of the 21st Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 25, 2021

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

**Daily Lectionary:** Deuteronomy 27:1-26; Matthew 17:14-27

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* (Genesis 1:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Everything that is, was created by God. You must take this personally. You are not an accidental being. The God who by His Word spoke creation itself into existence and marked times and seasons, created you. Every part of your being is the creative work of God. Your mind, your emotions, your physical self, are all a gracious gift from God the Father. He says of you as He did of the created order, "very good."

However, our experience in this life is not always "very good." The rebellious sin brought into the world by the man and the woman has altered our reality. Our "very good" bodies betray us. We endure depression and anxiety. Cancers and viruses take away our loved ones in death. We sin daily in thought, word and deed, abusing others made in the image of God. Something must be done to reverse the downward slide into death that dogs all of humanity.

The Son of God, through whom all things were made (John 1:3), the One who is God of God and Light of Light, came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man (Nicene Creed). The eternal Son of God suffered on the Cross and was buried in death. On the Third Day He rose again to bring resurrection life to all who believe in Him. You must take this personally, too. You have been joined to the death and life of Jesus in your Baptism. The God who created the heavens and the earth has given you a new creation in His Son, Jesus. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again (re-created) he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). You have been re-created by the water and the Word. Your sins have been died for by Jesus and the way to a never-ending life has been opened for you. In Jesus, God the Father once again speaks over you these amazing words, "Very good." Yes, you are! In Jesus you are very good indeed. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*We all believe in one true God, Who created earth and heaven, The Father who  
to us in love Has the right of children given. He in soul and body feeds us; All we  
need His hand provides us; Through all snares and perils leads us, Watching  
that no harm betide us. He cares for us by day and night; All things governed by  
His might. Amen.*  
(*"We All Believe in One True God"* LSB 954, st.1)

## Tuesday of the 21st Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 26, 2021

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

**Daily Lectionary:** Deuteronomy 28:1-22; Matthew 18:1-20

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*  
(Ephesians 6:10-11)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. I spent eight months in the country of Afghanistan as a United States Navy chaplain. Nearly every day for those eight months I had to put on a 17-pound protective armored vest and a three-pound Kevlar helmet. Many times, I wondered if I could just dispense with wearing that cumbersome gear and lighten my load. But soon enough, the sound of enemy fire or the thought of my wife and three young children at home motivated me to hoist on that armor for another day. It would have been foolish to cast aside the protection that had been issued to me. I was given the armor to protect me from danger in a dangerous combat zone.

So it is for you. Whether you recognize it or not, you are fighting on a great and terrible battlefield. The enemy is mostly unseen but nonetheless real. The spiritual forces of evil and Satan are constantly scheming to find a way to separate you from the Lord your God. You even must battle your old sinful self with its deadly desires.

The great news is that you are not alone in this fight. Christ, the victor over death and the devil, fights for you. He lords His Cross, death, and empty grave over the evil one and He provides you with the armor to ensure your survival in body and soul. The armor comes from Him. You have the belt of truth, the Word of God. You wear the breastplate of righteousness: the righteousness of Christ that covers your sinful self. You have been given the Gospel of peace, that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). You have received the shield of faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), the helmet of salvation, and the Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit. All these gifts are from God and are bestowed on you by God's grace in Christ. You are united to Jesus. You are baptized! His strength and might are yours (Romans 6:3-4)! It is pure gift. You are safe and sound in Jesus. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*So wield well your blade, Rejoice in its pow'rs, Fight on undismayed For Jesus is ours! Then in Him victorious Your armor lay down, To praise, ever glorious, His cross and His crown.*  
(“Be Strong in the Lord” LSB 665, st.5)

## Wednesday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 24, 2021

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

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

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*  
(1 Timothy 2:1-3)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The catechism reading for last week was directed to those who serve in civil government. This week the target of Luther's admonition is those who hold the holy office of citizen. Luther utilizes one text from Holy Scripture to address rulers but five for those who are governed. Rulers are to remember that their rule is really a stewardship of God's care and order for society and the world. The governed are reminded that those who rule are a gift from God.

Receiving the gift of civil government moves the faithful to pray for those who rule. Praying for everyone obviously means that we exclude no one. This was not an easy thing for those first Christians to do. They saw their friends and family dragged into coliseums throughout the Roman Empire where they were tortured and sacrificed. Instead of calling for Christians to revolt, Paul urges those Christians to pray for the very leaders who persecuted them.

We hesitate to pray for politicians who are revealed to be corrupt and immoral in both their public and personal lives. But there is a very good reason for us to pray even for unbelieving, immoral rulers: so that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. That peace serves the Gospel. Leading peaceful and quiet lives allows us to speak the Gospel of peace to all. We quietly tell people that their hope is never in man or the rulers of men. We speak the truth that salvation is found in no Name other than the name of Jesus. We bring people to the preaching of the Word and the washing of water and the Word. We teach that the Body and Blood of Jesus is truly present for forgiveness of sins in the Holy Supper. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O God, as You have established all temporal authority for our blessing, to reward the good and punish those who do evil, bless those who hold public office in our land that we may live in peace with all godliness. Teach us to honor and respect those who hold office and to receive them as gifts of your gracious hand. Uphold all in public office, that they may execute their duties faithfully and diligently, in the fear of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## Tuesday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 23, 2021

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**Today's Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11  
**Daily Lectionary:** Daniel 3:1-30; Revelation 20:1-15

*For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Thessalonian Christians were confused about the end. Some thought that Christ had already come, and they had missed it. But the apostle Paul reminds them that the Last Day will be so unmistakable that no one is going to miss it. Others thought that those who had died already were lost, that you had to be alive on the day Christ appears. Paul reminds them that the Last Day is resurrection day when all will rise, and believers will be joined to Jesus for all eternity.

Paul reminds them that they are not in the dark about the return of Jesus. They are prepared by the Word and promises of God. And to remain watchful and ready for the return of Jesus, Paul encourages them to remember what God has granted them for that day. "But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (Ephesians 6:14). They need not fear the great and terrible day of the Lord. For God has not destined them for wrath, but to obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus who died for their sin, would come again in mercy.

This is our confidence as well. The uncertainty of life in the dying world can be very troubling for us. We are tempted to doubt and fear all the time. The end is lived in confidence, not fear. It is looked for with expectation, not terror. It holds the promise of resurrection and life for those who trust Christ's salvation. Christ has made you ready for His return. He declares you to be children of light, having been made so by the Light of the World. "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Lord, let at last Thine angels come, To Abr'ham's bosom bear me home, That I may die unfearing; And in its narrow chamber keep My body safe in peaceful sleep Until thy reappearing. And then from death awaken me, That these mine eyes with joy may see, O Son of God, Thy glorious face, My savior and my fount of grace. Lord, Jesus Christ, my prayer attend, And I will praise thee without end.*  
(*"Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart"* LSB 708, st. 3)

## Wednesday of the 21st Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 27, 2021

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**Today's Reading:** *Small Catechism*: Sacrament of the Altar, part 5  
**Daily Lectionary:** Deuteronomy 29:1-29; Matthew 18:21-35

*But that person is worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words:  
"Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."  
(Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. In his teaching on worthy reception of the Sacrament of the Altar in the *Large Catechism*, Luther writes: "Whoever now accepts these words and believes that what they declare is true has forgiveness. But whoever does not believe it has nothing, since he allows it to be offered to him in vain and refuses to enjoy such a saving good. The treasure, indeed, is opened and placed at everyone's door, yes, upon his table. But it is necessary that you also claim it and confidently view it as the words tell you. This is the entire Christian preparation for receiving this Sacrament worthily."

Faith receives what Jesus gives. It is as simple as that. Unbelief blocks the path of those gifts. Who in the world would refuse such a gift as Jesus' Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins? Well, your old Adam would. He would rather nurse and nurture his sin. He would prefer to withhold forgiveness from all those losers who have sinned against him. Along with the Pharisee in Jesus' parable in Luke 18, the old Adam says, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector."

Yet the "treasure indeed, is opened and placed at everyone's door." Jesus died for the Pharisee and the tax collector alike. His desire is for the life, not the death, of sinners. So, Jesus comes for the broken and repentant sinners to rescue them. He feeds you with His precious Body and Blood and fills you with faith to receive that gift as the words tell you. To receive the Sacrament worthily is to trust the words of Jesus. Mistrusting the words of our Lord or trusting in our own righteousness makes us truly unworthy.

God be praised that He sends the Word of the Law to bring us to repentance and the Word of forgiveness that brings us life. And best of all, thanks be to God that such forgiveness is placed in our mouths in the Holy Supper of our Lord! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Lord Jesus Christ, life-giving bread, May I in grace possess You. Let me with holy food be fed, Your wounded hand now feed me. Though weary, sinful, sick, and weak, Refuge in You alone I seek, Give me Your grace and mercy.*  
(*"Lord Jesus Christ, Life-Giving Bread"* LSB 625, st. 1)

## St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles

OCTOBER 28, 2021

**Today's Reading:** John 15:12-21

**Daily Lectionary:** Deuteronomy 30:1-20; Matthew 19:1-15

*"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."* (John 15:16)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Faith bears fruit. The fruit of which Jesus speaks is first the confession of His saving Word to the world and faith that prays with boldness and confidence. That fruit bearing cannot happen without life flowing from the vine. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). So it was that Jesus chose Simon and Jude to be apostles. They would carry out their appointed task to bring the message of salvation in the Name of Jesus to many lands. Churchly tradition indicates that Simon and Jude travelled together as far as Persia (modern day Iran) proclaiming the Gospel all along the way. While in Persia they were both killed (martyred) for the sake of their confession of Christ. We don't know anything more about these two men. Perhaps that is the way it ought to be.

We do know what is most important concerning these two. They were chosen by Jesus, filled with faith, and sent to bear the fruits of faith in this world. That is the best that can be said of anyone.

It is what we can say about you! While you do not share the unique apostolic calling of Simon and Jude, you do have a share in their Lord. It is Jesus who called you by His Word, most of you first in the watery Word of Holy Baptism. You were filled with faith and are continually strengthened in that faith as you receive His rich Word of forgiveness each day, and His Body and Blood on the Lord's Day.

And you are sent to bear the fruits of faith in the places where God the Father sends you. Simon and Jude are pretty much anonymous saints. What a great thing to say of any Christian. We are nothing. Jesus is everything! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Almighty God, You chose Your servants Simon and Jude to be numbered among the glorious company of the apostles. As they were faithful and zealous in their mission, so may we with ardent devotion make known the love and mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.* (Collect for St. Simon and St. Jude)

## Monday of the Last Week

NOVEMBER 22, 2021

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

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

*"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind...I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress."* (Isaiah 65:17,19a)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Isaiah saw the vision God placed before him. Nearly 700 years before Christ came, God lifted his eyes to the Messiah in whom he could delight. It was a time not unlike our time. The people around Isaiah rejected God. There were plenty of struggles in life and worries of the world to catch Isaiah's attention. People were so bad that Isaiah had to wonder how long it would be before God had enough.

Isaiah knew God would punish the people all the while keeping His small group faithful to Him. To these believers God spoke words to lift them past the present struggles to the delight of the coming new heaven and new earth. "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth."

This is the work to be accomplished at the end of all time. It is a remarkable place, the new heavens and new earth. There the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. People who carry with them the horrors of death and the pain of sickness, all the shameful things we have done and encouraged. All the ways we've been sinned against or led others to sin. Those things won't come to our minds again. And there the sound of weeping and distress will be no more. There won't be stillbirths or babies who die after a short time in life. People won't pass away suddenly. Accidents won't end lives, because there will be no more death. All the celebrating of life we have done by the side of a departed relative will be completed as we realize the delights of the new creation.

These are promises that we take on faith now but are guaranteed for us by the death of Jesus and His resurrection from the grave. One day we will see it all clearly on the holy mountain of the Lord. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O Sweet and blessed country, The home of God's elect! O sweet and blessed country That faithful hearts expect! In mercy, Jesus, bring us To that eternal rest With You and God the Father And Spirit, ever blest.* ("Jerusalem the Golden" LSB 672, st.4)



## The Last Sunday of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 21, 2021

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

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

*"And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."* (Matthew 25:10-13)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. I remember as a child waiting for my dad to come home from work. The difference in the way I waited depended on how the day had gone. If I'd misbehaved that day and heard those dreaded words from Mom, "Wait until your father gets home," I'd be waiting with more than a little bit of dread. But if it had been a good day then the waiting was filled with joyful anticipation.

As baptized people of God we wait for the Lord's return with joy, not fear. We are confident in His promise of the forgiveness of all our sins, for the Jesus who is coming soon is the same Jesus who died on the Cross for us to pay for our sins. The foolish virgins had no time for faithful waiting. They figured that they would be ready when the bridegroom came, and they took for granted that they had a place at the wedding feast. In their foolish figuring, they lost out. They hear chilling words, "I don't know you." For the wise virgins in the parable, the Lord's return doesn't bring panic or fear. They welcome the bridegroom with joy.

The Lord's return comes with deliverance, with salvation. It reveals all that was won for us on Jesus' Cross but remained hidden to the world and known only by faith, even our life and salvation and the forgiveness of all our sins. This Gospel news enlivens our faith and we look with joyful anticipation for our Lord's return. By His grace alone we are counted as wise and well-prepared.

As we await the return of Jesus on the day that ends all days, we receive His words with humble and wide-awake faith: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." Come, Lord Jesus! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O Lord, absolve Your people from their offenses that, from the bonds of our sins which by reason of our frailty we have brought upon ourselves, we may be delivered by Your bountiful goodness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.* (Collect for the Last Sunday of the Church Year)

## Friday of the 21st Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 29, 2021

**Daily Lectionary:** Deuteronomy 31:1-29; Matthew 19:16-30

*Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.* (Deuteronomy 31:6)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Moses was tired. Like a 120-years-old kind of tired. He had been a faithful saint and sinner servant of the LORD his God. From his leading of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, to Mount Sinai and the giving of the covenant, through the 40-year wandering in the wilderness, right up to the edge of the Promised Land of Canaan and the river Jordan. Moses would not be the man to lead the people of God into the land flowing with milk and honey. That would be the job of another saint and sinner servant named Joshua. Moses must give way to Joshua.

Perhaps you know already that Jesus' Hebrew name is Joshua. Moses must give way to Jesus. The Law of God spoken through Moses serves to drive us to repentance and a sense of hopelessness in the face of our sin. Paul wrote, "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20-21). Moses can take you to the edge of the Promised Land, but he can't get you to the other side of the Jordan. We need Joshua to do that for us.

Jesus is our Joshua. He is true man, sharing the same flesh with Joshua, Moses, and you, yet was without sin. He took our sin upon Himself and died with it. His resurrection is the testimony of His saving work. Jesus is the perfect Joshua who carries us through the water of Holy Baptism and into the promised land of forgiveness and a life that has no end.

Moses' words of encouragement to the people are glorious. He spoke of what he knew to be true. God is faithful to His promise to deliver and save. Hear His Word and take it to heart: Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of death and the devil for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*As true as God's own word is true, Not earth nor hell's satanic crew Against us shall prevail. Their might? A joke, a mere façade! God is with us and we with God--Our vict'ry cannot fail.* ("O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe" LSB 666, st. 3)

## Saturday of the 21st Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 30, 2021

**Today's Reading:** Introit for Reformation Day  
(Psalm 34:1-2, 11, 22; antiphon: Psalm 119:46)

**Daily Lectionary:** Deuteronomy 31:30-32:27; Matthew 20:1-16

*I will speak of your testimonies before kings, O Lord and shall not be put to shame.*  
(Psalm 119:46)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Tomorrow the Lutheran church celebrates Reformation Day. The first Lutheran confessors were brave men. They lived in the confidence that the words of Psalm 119:48 were true. Were they to confess the truth of God's Word before the rulers of their age, they believed that they would not be put to shame. And what truth did they confess? How about this from the Introit for Reformation Day? "The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned."

We take our refuge in the redeeming work of God's only Son, Jesus. He has redeemed our life by exchanging His life for ours. His death on the Cross destroys the power of sin and death. In Jesus we are free from the shame and guilt of our sin. So, we might be tempted to do some fist-bumping over our great heritage as Lutherans. After all, we believe we get the whole salvation thing right--righter than anyone else.

Yet it just might be time for a bit of garment rending and godly repentance. We, too, often take our Lutheran birthright for granted and allow the pride of self to gain the upper hand. We fear, love and trust in many things to the exclusion of God.

In repentance and faith, we turn to that which is most sure. We confess with our forefathers in the faith, "Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Romans 3:27-28).

This gives us the confidence to stand and confess the truth like our spiritual fathers. We, too, have confidence to confess justification by faith, for Jesus' sake. And we will not be ashamed in the doing of it. "And take they our life, goods, fame, child, wife, though these all be gone, our vict'ry has been won; the kingdom ours remaineth" ("A Mighty Fortress is Our God" LSB 656, st.4). In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Lord God, bless Your Word wherever it is proclaimed. Make it a word of power and peace to convert those not yet your own and to confirm those who have come to saving faith. May Your Word pass from the ear to the heart, from the heart to the lip, and from the lip to the life that, as You have promised, Your Word may achieve the purpose for which You send it; through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.*

## Saturday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 20, 2021

**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 1:1-21; Matthew 28:1-20

*O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!*  
(From the Introit for the Last Sunday of the Church Year)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The days of this world are numbered. That is a truth revealed to us in the Scripture readings for the last Sundays of the Church Year with their focus on the return of Jesus on the Last Day. The Introit for tomorrow, from Psalm 39, brings this reality home to us in a heart-wrenchingly personal way. It is an expression of David's anguish and a cry that comes from our lips, too.

We don't know the exact circumstances David was facing as he wrote this psalm, but we can surely recognize the inner struggle he writes about. In verse 4, David cries out to God, "Lord, make me to know my end and what is the measure of my days; Let me know how fleeting I am." This is a psalm of lament. David prays out of his pain. He explains his feelings to God and cries out in despair.

In this prayer, David moves from his inner struggle to the realization that his life is fleeting. David remembers that his hope cannot be found in any of his earthly circumstances or wealth; his hope is in the Lord. His early focus on worldly wealth and success faded away. He saw that God's forgiveness was his greatest treasure. "But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you. Save me from all my transgressions; do not make me the scorn of fools" (vv. 7,8).

What a beautiful thing it is that the Introit for tomorrow delivers as the words of Psalm 39 are placed on our lips. As we see this present world passing away, God grants us an eternal perspective. Our hope is in the Lord who has saved us from all our transgressions by His own Cross death, and has given us a resurrection life that never ends. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Our hope and expectation, O Jesus, now appear; Arise, O Sun so longed for, O'er this benighted sphere. With heart and hands uplifted, We plead, O Lord, to see The day of earth's redemption That sets Your people free.*  
(*"Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers"* LSB 515, st.4)

## Friday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 19, 2021

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

*Jeremiah said, "You shall not be given to them. Obey now the voice of the Lord in what I say to you, and it shall be well with you, and your life shall be spared."*  
(Jeremiah 38:20)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The false prophet Hananiah declared in the Name of the LORD that God would come to the aid of His people. The items that were stolen from the temple would be returned, along with the thousands of Judeans who had been captured and taken away--including the son of the king--within two years' time. On the surface, this sounded great! God had come to the aid of His people in the past, so Hananiah's words seemed very reasonable. And Jeremiah agreed! Yes, Hananiah--this sounds wonderful! I agree, and I wish that the LORD does so.

But wait. Listen to what I say. Your prophecy, Hananiah, contradicts what the prophets before you, like Isaiah and I have proclaimed before. You, Hananiah--you say something else! The previous prophets promise God's judgment for your wickedness, and it is going to get much worse before it gets better (Jeremiah 28).

No one wanted to hear this kind of news, especially the king. And so, Jeremiah was tossed into a well and left to die. But it wouldn't be for Jeremiah to die on account of the rebelliousness and faithlessness of the people. He would be rescued from the pit and would continue to preach God's wrath AND God's mercy.

Centuries after Jeremiah's trials, God would send the prophet to end all prophets: His Son. Jesus would do what no son of Adam could do. He would obey the voice of the Lord. He would drink the cup of suffering. He would bear the sins of the world on the Cross and be buried in a cold tomb (Matthew 27:57-66). Now the prophecy of Jeremiah is fulfilled, and this message is spoken of us: "It shall be well with you and your life shall be spared." All thanks to Jesus. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Almighty and everlasting God, You desire not the death of a sinner but that all would repent and live. Hear our prayers for those outside the Church. Take away their iniquity, and turn them from their false gods to You, the living and true God. Gather them into Your holy Church to the glory of Your name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## Reformation Day

OCTOBER 31, 2021

**Today's Reading:** Romans 3:19-29

**Daily Lectionary:** Deuteronomy 32:28-52; Matthew 20:17-34

*The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*  
(Romans 3:22-25)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Ask your non-Lutheran Christian friends what they would identify as the core of their faith. I'm confident most would answer, "Jesus," and God be praised for that! If you were to ask them to describe how someone might connect to Jesus, the answers may sound something like this: "You have to make a decision for Jesus," or "You need to invite Jesus into your heart and make Him Lord of your life."

That is confused language and distorts the beautiful Gospel proclaimed so clearly in the Word of God. "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Romans 3:28). The faith that justifies doesn't come by way of our heart-felt decision but as a gift. God diagnoses the condition of every human heart. "For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22b-23). In another place, Paul describes our condition apart from Christ this way: "When we were dead in our trespasses, (God the Father) made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4).

We have been gifted with a rescue from our death with the news that we "are justified by grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). There it is! Your redemption and rescue from sin is in Christ Jesus alone! His death alone redeems you from the death penalty that your sin would merit. His resurrection guarantees your own resurrection of the Last Day and eternal life right now! Faith, grace, gift, redemption are words that define our faith and describe how we are connected to Jesus. We give thanks and praise to God for His saving work! It's all from and in Him. No boasting our part. Grace alone. Faith alone. Christ alone!! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Almighty and gracious Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on Your faithful people. Keep us steadfast in Your grace and truth, protect and deliver us in times of temptation, defend us against all enemies, and grant to Your Church Your saving peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*  
(Collect for Reformation Day)

## All Saints' Day

NOVEMBER 1, 2021

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

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

*And he opened his mouth and taught them saying... "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* (Matthew 5:2,4)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. In the Revelation to John, the apostle is given to see what we can now only trust to be real. He sees an ever-expanding vision of heaven starting with the throne of God, heavenly creatures, 24 elders, the Lamb who was slain, thousands and thousands of angels, and then an uncountable multitude of those who died but now live in Jesus. The vision John sees provides the fulfillment of Jesus' promise given in Matthew 5 and the words of the text today. "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted."

Some of you reading this devotion have experienced the deep sadness that death brings. Perhaps you've lost a grandparent or even your mother or father. It is a terrible thing to stand at the grave of a loved one and realize that they are gone from this life. We can be overwhelmed with grief. And then Jesus comes with His Word, "They shall be comforted." Our comfort is found only in Him. It was Jesus who went into death for us. He, who is our source of life, gave Himself to suffering and a crucifixion death for the whole world. On the Third Day He kicked in the gate of death and the grave by rising again and He brings the whole world with Him.

You have been died for by Jesus. You have been baptized into His death AND resurrection. Those we remember today, who have died in the Lord Jesus, now rest from the craziness of this life and rejoice before the throne of God. They, and we, are comforted always and only in Jesus. "Christ has wiped away their tears forever; they have that for which we still endeavor. By them are chanted songs that ne'er to mortal ears were granted." "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:56-57). In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy communion, the mystical Body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*  
(Collect for All Saints)

## Thursday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 18, 2021

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 37:1-21; Matthew 27:33-56

*And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.* (Matthew 27:50-51)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. In the Old Testament Divine Service the only way to enter into God's presence was within the tabernacle. The tabernacle was divided into two parts: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place and only a High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and then just once a year.

These two Holy places were separated by a thick veil. Early Jewish writings describe the veil of the temple as being four inches thick, and it took up to 300 priests to move it. The temple curtain was a preaching that the only access to God was through the mediation of the High Priest and the blood of bulls and goats.

The death of Jesus marked the end of the sacrificial system and the need for the temple curtain. In the death of Jesus, and by His blood, a new and living way to God's holy presence has been opened for the whole world. "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:19-23).

We have this access to God through our Baptism in Christ, the washing of our evil conscience with pure water. Each time we receive His Word of Absolution, hear the preaching of His Gospel, and feast on His Body and Blood, we are joined with Jesus in the heavenly places. This is the gift Jesus wins for us by His death on the Cross. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*In ev'ry time of need, Before the judgment throne, Thy work, O Lamb of God, I'll plead, Thy merits, not my own. Amen.* ("O Perfect Life of Love" LSB 452, st.6)



## Wednesday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 17, 2021

**Today's Reading:** *Small Catechism*: Table of Duties, Civil Government  
**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 33:1-22; Matthew 27:11-32

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.*  
(Romans 13:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. It was most likely that Nero was the Roman emperor when Paul wrote the letter to the Roman church. If you know anything about Nero, it should be this--he was an anti-Christ figure. He lived his life in complete opposition to everything that the Gospel of Jesus stood for and what Paul wrote about in his letter to the Roman church. Nero was selfish, sexually abusive, greedy, and violent. The Christians of Rome would feel Nero's wrath in the 60s when he would blame Christians for the burning of Rome, and a year later he would have Paul executed. This is the context in which Paul writes: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities."

Paul isn't arguing that the Roman government is worthy of being obeyed because everything they do is godly. Rather, he is arguing that the way of Christ is not to fight so that one side wins and one side loses, but rather to live differently so that all sides may be freed from the bondage of violence and death and sin. Paul is arguing for the living of a Christian life, in defiance to the Roman way of living, and for the acceptance of whatever punishment is dealt out for living as a disciple of Jesus.

Our life of faith will always be cross-shaped and Paul would embody this himself in his imprisonments and ultimately in his own death. In the Table of Duties Luther uses Romans 13:1-4 to address those who rule. He will have something to say to citizens later. But here he would have those who occupy the holy office of governing authority recognize their responsibility as a servant of God for the sake of peace and good order. We include in the prayers of the Church petitions on behalf of those who rule. Rulers are given a great responsibility from God. They are to rule with the knowledge that God has placed them in their positions of authority. It benefits the Gospel when they acknowledge this, and the Church is enabled to continue to preach forgiveness of sins in Jesus for the life of the world. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Eternal Lord, ruler of all, graciously regard those who have been set in positions of authority among us that, guided by Your Spirit, they may be high in purpose, wise in counsel, firm in good resolution, and unwavering in duty, that under them we may be governed quietly and peaceably; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## Tuesday of the 22nd Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 2, 2021

**Today's Reading:** Matthew 18:23-35  
**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 1:1-19; Matthew 21:23-46

*"So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."*  
(Matthew 18:35)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Yikes! The words of Jesus at the end of today's reading devastate my old sinful and self-righteous self. I know it is the same for you. We shouldn't be surprised that we will need to forgive others and receive forgiveness, too. Jesus embedded this truth in the prayer He gave for us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

As much as I'd like to soften Jesus' words about the consequences of withholding forgiveness from a fellow sinner, I can't. The words say what they say. Forgiveness between fellow believers in Jesus isn't an optional thing. It will be a necessary reality as long as we live in close proximity to fellow sinners. It may be that the hurts caused by sins done against us may take years to heal and we may need frequent confessions and Absolutions.

The powerful words of Jesus move us to recognize that our life is sustained by the forgiveness that flows from Him to us in the word of Absolution, the remembrance of our Baptism, the preaching of the Gospel and our reception of the Holy Supper. Our debt of sin has been released in the flood of Jesus' blood. This alone is the reason we can forgive those who have sinned against us. We can forgive because God, in Christ, has forgiven us. So we are then called to forgive one another unconditionally and always. To refuse to forgive puts you in the position of the pitiless servant in Jesus' parable. To persistently refuse to forgive is to be unjust and wicked. It is to live in denial of the forgiveness given to you in Jesus.

That is not how it shall be with you. Repent of your desire to withhold forgiveness to the brother or sister who desires it (or even if he doesn't). Receive forgiveness from Jesus, the forgiveness that He won at the Cross and delivers to you by Word and Sacrament. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Forgive our sins as we forgive, You taught us Lord to pray; But You alone can grant us grace To live the words we say. Lord cleanse the depths within our souls And bid resentment cease; Then bound to all in bonds of love, Our lives will spread your peace.* ("Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive" LSB 843, st.1,4)

## Wednesday of the 22nd Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 3, 2021

**Today's Reading:** *Small Catechism*: Table of Duties,  
Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 3:6-4:2; Matthew 22:1-22

*He [the pastor] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*  
(Titus 1:9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Table of Duties of the *Small Catechism* gives shape to the life of the believer. We are not left to make our own way in determining the contours of our holy orders and positions. Are you a pastor or do you know a pastor?

The Table of Duties tells us what God says about the shape of that work as the Office of pastor or preacher. That is the focus in our *Small Catechism* reading for today. This Holy Office is defined by three passages of Scripture, all drawn from what are appropriately called "pastoral epistles." Paul reminds pastors Timothy and Titus of the great responsibility they bear as servants of Christ and of God's people.

All three texts included in this section of the Table of Duties deal with unique aspects of pastoral work. First is an admonition to a life that is not characterized by open, public sin. Second is a warning against conceit (your pastors know that is their greatest weakness). And third is a reminder of the pastor's responsibility to faithfully use God's word to encourage all believers and refute false teaching.

Humanly speaking, your pastor can do none of these things well, if at all. But thanks be to God that NOTHING rests in the person of your pastor. As John the Baptist said of his relationship to Jesus, Paul wrote of himself and all pastors, "But we have this treasure (the preaching of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments) in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Your pastor is as much of a sinner as you are. He needs the same forgiveness of Christ that he proclaims to you in the Absolution. And God gives that to him as freely as He does to you. Give thanks to God this day for your pastor. Pray that God would keep him faithful in his calling and safe from the snares of the devil. He needs such prayer. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O almighty God, Your Son, Jesus Christ, gave to His holy apostles many excellent gifts and commanded them earnestly to feed His flock. Make all pastors diligent to preach Your holy Word and the people obedient to follow it that together they may receive the crown of everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## Tuesday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 16, 2021

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

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

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*  
(2 Peter 3:9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Have you noticed that when you are anxiously waiting for something, like the Amazon Prime item you ordered just yesterday, it takes forever for that thing to arrive? In the reading today the apostle Peter points out to us that a person's perception of how long it is taking for the Lord to return in judgment is affected by that person's perspective. The one who mocks the faith thinks that it's taking way too long, and he uses that to argue that Jesus is never coming back and therefore that the Christian faith is nothing but nonsense.

The believer has an altogether different perspective on this. Believers see the Lord's delay as a blessing and as an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel far and wide, so that the Holy Spirit might work through that Gospel to bring more to Baptism and to life in the kingdom of God. After Jesus completed the redemption of sinners by His perfect life and His innocent suffering and death, and after He proclaimed it in His resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus commissioned His Church to "go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15) or, more specifically, to "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 observe all that [He has] commanded [us]" (Matthew 28:19, 20).

He who loves sinners so much that He laid down His very life for us all is, by the delay of His return, giving more opportunity for His Church to love others as He has loved us by sharing His Gospel with them. He is not slow in His return. He is gracious. And you are on the receiving end of that grace. "Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace" (2 Peter 3:14). In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*My Savior paid the debt I owe And for my sin was smitten; Within the Book of Life I know My name has now been written. I will not doubt, for I am free, and Satan cannot threaten me; There is no condemnation!*  
(*"The Day is Surely Drawing Near"* LSB 508, st.5)

## Monday of the Second-Last Week

NOVEMBER 15, 2021

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

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

*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.* (Daniel 7:13-14)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. As he lay in his bed in Babylon, Daniel received from the LORD an incredible vision of the Last Day. It included four strange and fearsome beasts, the fiery throne of the Ancient of Days (God the Father) and "one like a son of man" (God the Son) receiving dominion and glory over all the world.

That name, "son of man" reminds us that Jesus shares our humanity. He's a descendant of Adam, the first man, by His incarnation in the womb of Mary. He is our Brother. He bore the sins of His brothers and sisters to the Cross and freed all the world from its sins by His death.

But Daniel didn't see Jesus in His humility that night, but in His glory, coming on the clouds, standing before the Ancient of Days, and being given authority, glory, and power. The Son of Man reigns in victory.

And this is what we are given to see of Jesus in these Last Days. This is our encouragement in these gray and latter days. Jesus has defeated sin, death, and the devil by His dying and rising. He will return in glory to judge the living and the dead.

When the books are opened on the day of His return, we will be judged as holy and righteous in Jesus. We have been joined to Jesus in our Baptism and "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). On that great and glorious day, we will join with the thousands and ten thousand times ten thousands in praise of the Son of Man whose kingdom shall not pass away. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O God of God, O Light of Light, O Prince of Peace and King of Kings: To you in heaven's glory bright The song of praise forever rings. To Him who sits upon the throne, The Lamb one slain but raised again, Be all the glory He has won, All thanks and praise! Amen, amen. ("O God of God, O Light of Light" LSB 810, st.1)*

## Thursday of the 22nd Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 4, 2021

**Today's Reading:** Micah 6:6-8

**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 5:1-19; Matthew 22:23-46

*With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?* (Micah 6:6)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Of all the prophets identified as "minor" in our Bible commentaries, perhaps Micah is the "minorist." You do know one famous line from this prophet, from the fifth chapter. "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming is from of old, from ancient days" (Micah 5:2). And really, this one verse helps us understand our reading today.

We know the fulfillment of the prophecy in Micah 5 is Jesus. He is the one born in Bethlehem of the woman, Mary, to be ruler of Israel. He ruled in humility from the Cross, thus fulfilling the ancient promise of a savior for all humanity. And He reigns in glorified humility at the right hand of God the Father. His is the sacrifice that pleases God. He offers up Himself in death for the sake of the sin of your soul. He executes God's justice by becoming the sacrifice for our sin under the burning wrath of God. He loves kindness and displays it in patient love toward us sinners. He walks humbly with God by way of His Cross. And all of this is credited to you by God's grace in Christ.

So, Paul writes, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-9). You come before the LORD covered by the death of Jesus. His sacrifice is alone pleasing to the Lord. So you bow before the LORD as one who has been baptized into Christ and thus clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27). You come to receive the fruits of Jesus' sacrifice at the table of the Lord with Jesus' own Body and Blood given into your mouth. You take heart that all the LORD requires of you has been done in Jesus! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Lord, you have raised me up To joy and exultation And clearly showed the way That leads me to salvation My sins are washed away; For this I thank you, Lord. Now with my heart and soul All evil I abhor.*

*("How Can I Thank You, Lord" LSB 703, st.3)*

## Friday of the 22nd Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 5, 2021

**Today's Reading:** Philippians 1:3-11

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

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*  
(Philippians 1:6)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. There is often much of life that seems incomplete. There is always some academic assignment or work project waiting for its completion. If we are single, we think that we would be finally complete with a spouse. If we are given a spouse, our sinful nature thinks that we could do with a better one. I suppose that is a byproduct of life in this sinful world. In this life there is always something left to get done, always something incomplete.

We are invited to a different perspective in our reading today. We are let in on Paul's loving words to the Christians at the church in Philippi. His words are an encouragement for them. They may have been frustrated that the work of the Gospel wasn't going as well as they had hoped. Perhaps the discouragements of life brought about by their own sins or the sins of others were weighing them down. Paul reminds them that they are loved by God and by him! They are pure and blameless in Christ and "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:11).

Despite their uncertainty, God was indeed at work in them. He saved them by the righteous life and death of Jesus. He filled them with the fruitful faith that comes through Jesus Christ. And that is what God has done for you, too. Don't be discouraged, dear child of God! All the incompleteness of your life will be unknown on the day of your resurrection. On that day Jesus will say of you, "Well done, good and faithful servant...enter in the [resurrection] joy of your master" (Matthew 25:23). He has begun that good work in you and will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O Jesus Christ, do not delay, But hasten our salvation; We often tremble on our way In fear and tribulation O hear and grant our fervent plea; Come mighty judge, and set us free From death and ev'ry evil.*  
(*"The Day Is Surely Drawing Near" LSB 508, st.7*)

## The Second-Last Sunday of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 14, 2021

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

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

*"And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'"*  
(Matthew 25:37-40)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Jesus tells us that He will come in His glory with an angel host and from His glorious throne he will make a judgment: sheep to the right and goats to the left. The sheep go into the eternal kingdom prepared for them before the foundations of the world. The goats go to an eternal fire. How the verdict is decided is what surprises people.

The wisdom of the world says that bad people will get what's coming to them. You know, "karma." And the good will receive a reward. What shocks the world, and our old sinful selves is that the judgment Jesus will render on the day of His return is not based on what people do but on what they are. So, in the text for this day, it is only after the separation is completed that we hear about their deeds, good or bad. The sheep are called righteous. We know how the Bible speaks of righteousness: It is a gift along with that faith that receives it (Ephesians 2). The goats lack faith and therefore righteousness.

The Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6), no matter how much good you do. But the faithful receive what has always been theirs since the foundation of the world--the kingdom. They are blessed by the Father.

And that is your standing before God in Christ. You are declared righteous before God because Jesus served you. He came all the way down into our flesh and took up our sins in His own body on the tree of the Cross. Your life is now hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). Your life in this world, and the good works you do, matter to those around you: the least and the lowly. And in the doing of those works, you do it to Jesus. Blessed are you by the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O Lord, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of the end of all things and the day of Your just judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with Your forever hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*  
(*Collect for the Second-Last Sunday of the Church Year*)



## Saturday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 13, 2021

**Today's Reading:** Introit for the Second-Last Sunday of the Church Year (Psalm 54:3-5, 7; antiphon; v.1-2)

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

*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil. . . Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.*  
(Jeremiah 29:11a-12)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. When you are having a challenging day--a day when you get bad news, the internet goes down, or you can't find your way out from under a challenging project--you may forget that God has called you as His own by virtue of your Baptism into Christ, planned for your welfare and given you a future with hope. The challenge is that in the dark times, you may not see the hope.

God sends the prophet Jeremiah to you and lifts your eyes from that hopelessness that may surround you. Hope is commonly used to mean a wish: Its strength, people believe, is the strength of the person's desire. That is always the wrong place to focus. What we find is that our own strength is never enough and our desires are ruled by the selfishness of sin. In contrast, the Bible presents hope as the confident expectation of what God has promised, and the strength of hope is in God's faithfulness.

Jeremiah 29 is a letter to the people of Judah who are currently in exile. The whole letter is God speaking to the people through the prophet Jeremiah, telling them that, eventually, things are going to get better. God will keep His promises to them and ultimately to all humanity in His Son. Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us that hope is firmly rooted in God: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." (Romans 15:13.) And the hope, joy, and peace we have flows from the wounded side of our crucified and risen Savior.

Hope isn't a matter of circumstances, it is the promise that God will sustain us when our days are filled with joy and peace or when they are terrible. Hope is the promise that Jesus will come again to judge the world and vindicate our trust in Him. Hope is like grace and faith: They are all promises that God has given to us in Christ as free gifts. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*What God ordains is always good: This truth remains unshaken. Though sorrow, need, or death be mine, I shall not be forsaken. I fear no harm. For with His arm He shall embrace and shield me; So to my God I yield me.*  
(“What God Ordains Is Always Good” LSB 760, st.6)

## Saturday of the 22nd Week after Trinity

NOVEMBER 6, 2021

**Today's Reading:** Introit for the Third-Last Sunday of the Church Year (Psalm 31:1-2a, 5, 24; antiphon v.9a, 15b, 17a)

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

*In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!*

*(From the Introit for the 23rd Sunday after Trinity)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. “Why is the Internet so slow?” we ask when the webpage doesn't load in a nanosecond. “What is wrong with these people, how long does it take to make a Big Mac?” we grumble in the drive-through while waiting fewer than two minutes. The blessing of rapid technological advancement has made us an impatient people.

This coming week in the Church Year will start the process of unlearning impatience. The Last Sundays of the Church Year give us the long perspective about our life of faith and teach us to wait in patient anticipation for the return of Jesus or our entrance into His eternal kingdom with our death. Psalm 31 is an insight into King David's concern about death, specifically his own death. We can all relate to David's concern in one way or another. We are confronted by death all the time. A tragic accident here, a heart attack there, and cancer consuming a loved one: It's all a preaching that this world and its inhabitants are dying.

Amid death and its terrors, David prays with confidence, “In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.” And we, too, can have the same confidence as David because we know to be true what David could only take on faith: Jesus Christ has come to rescue this whole world from death. He does that in a remarkable way: He dies. He is consumed by the sins of the world on the Cross so that all who believe and are baptized receive salvation and eternal life.

Jesus' bitter sufferings and death are the redemption price paid for you. Baptized into Jesus, you have a confidence that His work has rescued you from the guilt and shame of sin. His righteousness is credited to you and in Him you are delivered. We wait for the ultimate fulfillment of that promise with the return of Jesus in glory...or our own death. But we wait patiently on the Lord. He is our rock of refuge and a strong fortress to save. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Take heart, have hope, my spirit, And do not be dismayed; God helps in every trial And makes you unafraid. Await His time with patience Through darkest hour of night Until the sun you hoped for Delights your eager sight.*  
(“Entrust Your Days and Burdens” LSB 754, st.3)

## The Third-Last Sunday of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 7, 2021

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

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

*"For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."*  
(Matthew 24:27)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. How many predictions of the end of the world have you lived through? I'm so old that I remember predictions from the 1970s and a false prophet named Hal Lindsey. Some other old folks will remember the Y2K scare of 1999.

Isn't it funny how every generation can recall any number of false and deceiving prophecies of Jesus' return? I suppose I shouldn't describe faith-destroying teaching as "funny" but it is fascinating to see how the wicked one still sows confusion in the Church. That is Satan's old trick, to get the faithful to doubt the certainty of God's Word and move off into unsure speculation. Jesus does not leave us scratching our heads about the future or His return. It will happen, according to the time set by God the Father but the exact day and hour will remain unknown to us.

What is knowable for us is that Jesus will return, and the world will not miss that return. "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:27). Christians live in the confidence that Jesus' word is sure. We can look at the world and its decay and recognize that the return of Jesus is drawing near.

The day or the hour we will not know, but in the meantime, we will live by faith. Certainly, the signs of the end are all around us, including false christs and false prophets who seek to turn our attention from the sure promises of Jesus to wild speculations about the end. Don't listen to them or go after them. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith (Hebrews 12:2). In faith, wait patiently for His return. You have nothing to fear. You are died for by Jesus and He will keep you firm in the faith until the end. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O God, our refuge and strength, the author of all godliness, hear the devout prayers of Your Church especially in times of persecution, and grant that what we ask in faith we may obtain; through Jesus Christ, Your son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, on God, now and forever. Amen.*  
(Collect for the Third-Last Sunday of the Church Year)

## Friday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 12, 2021

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

*Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds, and dwell upon the land that the Lord has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever.*  
(Jeremiah 25:5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Jeremiah must have felt as if he was talking to himself. The people of Judah, to whom he was sent to preach, had a long history of ignoring God's Word. And they weren't about to listen to what Jeremiah had to say. He brought them the "promise" of exile and distress as God's judgment against their sin. They had a First Commandment problem, that is, they did not fear, love and trust in God above all things. Instead, when political and economic hard times came, they turned to pagan nations for help.

Yet the Lord did not abandon his people. He continued to send them servants of His redeeming work, like Jeremiah. He issued a loving call to repentance. "Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds." They did not listen. God would "banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. [The] whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jeremiah 25:10-11). Yet God's promise to save Judah stood, and He would bring a faithful remnant home.

We know that the promised answer to repentance is always forgiveness and mercy from the Lord. For the faithful of Judah that would mean a return to the land that God had sworn to Abraham and his seed forever. From those people would come the redeemer of the world, Jesus. Born of a daughter of the promise to Abraham, Jesus would answer for the sins of all in His death and resurrection. Hear the Word of the Lord, you, His saints. He loves you enough to call you to repentance and faith. He promises to answer with words of forgiveness. He will cause you to dwell in the land He has promised to all who love Him. He will bring you the promised land of eternal life and resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Grant us, O God, the strength and courage To live the faith our lips declare; Bless us in our baptismal calling; Christ's royal priesthood help us share. Turn us from ev'ry false allegiance, That we may trust in Christ alone: Raise up in us a chose people Transformed by love to be Your own.*  
(*"Mark How the Lamb of God's Self-Offering" LSB 600, st.3*)

## Martin of Tours

NOVEMBER 11, 2021

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

*Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are 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. Born into a pagan family in what is now Hungary around the year A.D. 316, Martin grew up in Lombardy (Italy). Coming to the Christian faith as a young person, he began a career in the Roman army. But sensing a call to a church vocation, Martin left the military and became a monk, affirming that he was "Christ's soldier." Eventually, Martin was named bishop of Tours in western Gaul (France). He is remembered for his simple lifestyle and his determination to share the Gospel throughout rural Gaul.

Our Lutheran confessions remind us that it is good to remember saints of old like Martin of Tours. We confess that "the remembrance of the saints is to be commended in order that we may imitate their faith and good works according to their calling" (Augsburg Confession, Article 21). A saint is not someone we go to in prayer so we can get a little extra favor in God's eyes or to get help in selling our house. A saint is one who has been made holy.

This is what the Holy Spirit has done for you in Holy Baptism, where the flood of Christ's own blood has made you holy, right, and good before your heavenly Father ("All Christians Who Have Been Baptized" LSB, 596, st.4). We remember and give thanks to God for the lives of the saints every Sunday in the Divine Service when we gather at the Lord's table with "angels, archangels, and the whole company of heaven." Who is that company of heaven but the saints? After we commune, we sing the hymn of St. Simeon ("Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace..."). Next, we pray that the Body and Blood of Jesus would cause us to live "in fervent love toward one another." This is a prayer that we would regard and treat one another as saints. As Paul says, "So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). We give thanks to God for our brother, Martin, one with us in the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen

*Lord God of hosts, you clothed your servant Martin the soldier with the spirit of sacrifice and set him as a bishop in your Church to be a defender of the true faith; Give us grace to follow in his steps, that at the last we may be found clothed with righteousness in the dwellings of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

## Monday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 8, 2021

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

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

*And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"  
(Exodus 32:7-8)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Well, that didn't take long. Moses had been gone a while, receiving from the LORD the Divine Service instructions for the people of Israel. While the LORD delivered specific instructions regarding the ways God would bless the people and put on them His holiness (Exodus 25-31), the people grew impatient and decided to fashion a god to whom they could offer sacrifice.

What does it take for you to doubt the good and gracious presence of God? We churn out false gods as fast as we can. Our gods, "O Israel," are money, popularity, success at school or work, the approval of the world, and the fulfillment of every disgusting appetite of our sinful selves. God brought His heavy hand of judgment on the people by the sword and a terrible plague. What do we deserve for our idolatry? We who do not fear, love, and trust in God above all things? What do we deserve? "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). That is the just payment for our idolatry.

But this is not what we receive. Here is the miracle of the Gospel: "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). One greater than Moses has come. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

Your idolatry is answered for in Jesus. Moses appealed to the mercy of God on behalf of the people. Jesus Himself intercedes for you now! You are not the object of God's wrath and anger. You are not outside the family of God but have been baptismally adopted as His own child. Return from your idolatry to the One who loves you to death in the death of His Son. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*We implore You, O Lord, in your kindness to show us Your great mercy that we may be set from our sins and rescued from the punishments that we rightly deserve; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## Tuesday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 9, 2021

**Today's Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18  
**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 22:1-23; Matthew 25:1-13

*For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* (1 Thessalonians 4:15-16)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. A recent Cornell University study on Americans' belief in an afterlife revealed that there has been very little change on this issue for more than 70 years. According to the study, belief in heaven has been true for over eight in ten people even since the late 1960s, while belief in life after death remains roughly in the range of seven in ten. That's the best that a "spiritual" world can give us, maybe an 80% chance that there is a heaven or even life after death.

I don't know what a study of the Thessalonian church would reveal, but it seems from Paul's letter that they were confused. So, Paul sets them straight. He claims the highest authority for his words: Jesus. Jesus has died and risen again. His resurrection is the proof that the dead will rise and the confirmation that He has the authority to raise the dead on the Last Day. At the command of the Lord, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God, the dead will rise.

If we are around to see that, we'll follow them to resurrection glory. The same is true for all who live and die in Christ. Sin and death have been conquered by the crucified and risen Jesus. This is our greatest strength when we face the trials and terrors of death.

We don't have a 70% or 80% chance of a resurrection to eternal life and a place at the Feast of the Lamb. We have a 100% guarantee from Jesus. Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*O Jesus Christ, do not delay, But hasten our salvation; We often tremble on the way In fear and tribulation O hear and grant our fervent plea: Come mighty judge, and set us free From death and ev'ry evil.*  
(*"The Day is Surely Drawing Near" LSB 508, st.7*)

## Wednesday of the Third-Last Week

NOVEMBER 10, 2021

**Today's Reading:** *Small Catechism:* Table of Duties, Hearers  
**Daily Lectionary:** Jeremiah 23:1-20; Matthew 25:14-30

*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."* (1 Timothy 5:17-18)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. It always seems a little dicey for a pastor to write about what the Small Catechism Table of Duties calls "What Hearers Owe Their Pastors." It's dicey because so much sin colors the discussion. Pastors feel that they are underappreciated and would welcome a few more digits added to their paychecks. They also know the Word of God directed to preachers, that they should not be lovers of money (1 Timothy 3:3). Hearers of the Word also struggle with their responsibilities as they look at the church budget and income statement and wonder if the good reverend couldn't get by with a little less. Life in the church is messy that way with sinner pastor and sinner hearer battling it out for the fiscal upper hand.

So, what is the answer? We heard part one last week when God's Word detailed the responsibility that the pastor has toward those who gather to hear the preaching. Pastors are brought to repentance by those words and receive Absolution for their sin by the Word of Jesus. Part two of the answer is detailed in today's catechism reading. Faith receives the preaching of God's Word and the preacher, with thanksgiving. A physical act of thanksgiving is providing for the worldly needs of the preacher. The pastor is worthy of "double honor" not because of who he is, but because of his work. He labors in preaching and teaching. He works to bring the Word of God to you in the best and worst times of your life.

You in turn give thanks to God for this gift by supporting the bearer of the Word. "The Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). Rejoice in the gift that God has given through your pastor and rejoice in the opportunity to show Christ's love to him. In doing so you free him from the worries and cares of this life to continue his loving service to you. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Gracious God, You send great blessings New each morning all our days. For Your mercies never ending, For Your love we offer praise. Lord, we pray that we, Your people Who Your gifts unnumbered claim, Through the sharing of Your blessings May bring glory to Your name.*  
(*"Gracious God, You Send Great Blessing" LSB 782, st.1*)