REFLECTIONS
TRINITY 11-16
AUGUST 23 - OCTOBER 3, 2020
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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.
Today’s Reading: Luke 18:9-14

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!”

(Luke 18:13)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Best “gotcha!” parable ever! We see what a self-righteous guy this Pharisee is and we think, “I’m glad I’m not like him!” Gotcha! Jesus won’t let anyone slide. Whoever we are, there’s always someone we can look down on and who probably looks down on us. It’s the tax collector who teaches us what it looks like to be at the bottom of the rung, with his good confession of faith: “Lord, there’s nobody to look down on. I’m the very bottom of the barrel. I’ve got nothing. Have mercy on me!”

Jesus does have mercy! That tax collector, who has nothing and is nothing, now has everything and is everything in Jesus. Jesus takes the low spot to give us the high spot. In doing so, He drags us down and saves us from our own high spots where, with the Pharisee, we think we can save ourselves. Jesus hanging on the Cross is the answer to that tax collector’s prayer. “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!” He does, by taking that tax collector’s and your place on the Cross. By suffering and dying and rising again. It’s so we can pray, “I thank God I’m not like Jesus! I don’t have to die for my sins! I’m forgiven!”

So we pray with the tax collector, “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!” The Lord answered that prayer when He died for you. That prayer was answered when you are washed and born from above at the font. That prayer is answered every time your pastor absolves you of your sins and preaches the Good News to you. That prayer is answered at the Lord’s altar where He gives his merciful flesh and blood to give you forgiveness so that you walk away justified. Holy. Saved. A beloved child of God. Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. And He is! In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, always more ready to hear than we to pray and to give more than we either desire or deserve, pour down upon us the abundance of Your mercy, forgiving those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things that we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Collect for the 11th Sunday after Trinity)
St. Bartholomew, Apostle
AUGUST 24, 2020

Daily Lectionary: 1 Kings 5:1-16; 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:17

But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

(Luke 22:26)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Luke tells us there was an argument among the apostles as to who was greatest. He doesn’t list names but we can suppose Bartholomew was in on it. Of course we know Peter, James, and John were kind of an “inner circle” of Jesus and maybe the other guys were jealous. At any rate, none of that is the point. Jesus came to do the serving. He came to do the bearing of the sins, the dying on the Cross, the rising from the dead. When He sends His apostles it is also to be servants. They are just supposed to do their job of preaching the Good News.

It’s easy to want to be the top dog. They want some recognition and glory perhaps. Don’t we all? That’s why Jesus teaches them—and us—that His kingdom doesn’t work that way. In the Church, preachers are given to serve us with Jesus’ gifts. They’re there to baptize, preach, and give Jesus’ Body and Blood. In short, pastors are there to give us Jesus’ forgiveness! Likewise we are given to be servants to our neighbors, to put others first and to love others in doing good to them.

Tradition says Bartholomew preached the Gospel as far away as Armenia and there was flayed alive as a martyr. In the end, what matters is not Bartholomew for his own sake but that he faithfully preached the Good News of Jesus even unto death. Today we give thanks for this Israelite in whom there was no deceit (John 1:47). Even though he may have been in on the argument as to who was greatest, the Lord still used him to preach the Good News of a Savior who saves us and makes us great in the kingdom of God. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

All praise for him whose candor Through all his doubt You saw When Philip at the fig tree Disclosed You in the Law. Discern, beneath our surface, O Lord, what we can be, That by Your truth made guileless, Your glory we may see.

(“By All Your Saints in Warfare” LSB 518, st.23)
Tuesday of the 11th Week after Trinity
AUGUST 25, 2020

Today’s Reading: Genesis 4:1-15
Daily Lectionary: 1 Kings 7:51-8:21; 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

And the Lord said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. (Genesis 4:15)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Cain killed his brother Abel. Cain thought the Lord should accept his sacrifice. Cain thought he was religious, spiritual, a “good Christian” even. Cain thought that he deserved God’s favor. Abel, whose name means, literally, “nothing but a breath of air,” knows that he deserves nothing. Only God’s mercy will save him. Somehow thinking that you deserve something from God makes it all the more irritating when you are dealing with a guy who doesn’t think that. It makes Cain so angry he kills his brother.

This is what happens, of course. Thinking we’re “all that!” is what gets our Brother killed. Jesus came to give us life and we gave Him death. He came to show us how we are saved by God’s grace. We showed Him who the real gods are by killing Him.

But here’s the wonder, the majesty, the irony, the mystery: In our killing of Jesus, He saves us. Cain was awful, but look at the words above: The Lord still protected Him. He would be a fugitive and vagabond on the earth, but the Lord protected him. That’s because, when it all comes down to it, Cain isn’t held accountable for murdering his brother. Jesus takes the blame! You and I aren’t held accountable for any of our sins. They’re all, every one of them, laid upon the Lamb of God who gave His life for us.

What awful things have you done to demonstrate you think you’re a better god than God? What awful things have you done to others? Whatever they are, however awful they may be, they are wiped out by the blood of Jesus, your Big Brother. He’s your Brother who gave His life for you and that means you’re a part of God’s family who can never be disowned. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

My soul looks back to see The burden Thou didst bear When hanging on the cursed tree; I know my guilt was there.

(“Not All the Blood of Beasts” LSB 431, st.4)
Wednesday of the 11th Week after Trinity
AUGUST 26, 2020

Today’s Reading: Small Catechism: The Office of the Keys
Daily Lectionary: 1 Kings 8:22-30, 46-63; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

Where is this written? This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” (Small Catechism: The Office of the Keys)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. What is the Office of the Keys? It’s the authority Christ gives to His Church to unlock the gates of heaven by pronouncing forgiveness on sinners! Wait a minute. How can someone forgive sins? Can’t only God forgive sins? Well, what does Jesus say? He tells His apostles, human men, to go and forgive sins.

Here’s the thing: When your pastor forgives your sins, he’s not saying that he’s God! He’s saying what God has told him to say. He’s speaking as a herald and ambassador of Jesus. “Hear ye! Hear ye! I declare to you that you have been pardoned by the King!”

What makes this announcement possible, and what gives it power and truth, is that Jesus died for your sins. He shed His blood for them. That’s forgiveness: God doesn’t count those sins against you. But since just reading it from the Book can make it sound too good to be true, God has given us real men, guys with voices and hands to tell us right into our ears that this forgiveness is ours.

You as a Christian can even pronounce that forgiveness to others. You can tell them, “Your sins are forgiven because Jesus died for them.” People know that the world will pile on. They know that there’s nothing out there but more guilt heaped up. Not for the followers of Jesus, though!

Whether it’s someone who is troubled by sin and goes to their pastor or one of your family or friends who comes to you, the Good News is the same: “Jesus forgives you!” Not because we say so, but because His Cross, empty tomb, and He Himself say so! In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

When ministers lay on their hands, Absolved by Christ the sinner stands; He who by grace the Word believes The purchase of His blood receives.
(“’As Surely As I Live,’ God Said” LSB 614, st.6)
Monica, Mother of Augustine  
AUGUST 27, 2020


Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.  
(2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

In the Name 轸 of Jesus. Amen. We often think of the work of pastors and missionaries in the conversion of unbelievers. The fact is, all Christians give a witness to those around them of God's goodness to the world in His Son, Jesus. One such Christian was Monica, the mother of the famed St. Augustine, a very important father in the early church. Monica, as described by her son, is said to have persevered in prayer for her pagan husband and for her wayward son. Her husband was baptized not long before his death, an answer to her fervent prayer. Likewise, her son Augustine later became a Christian when he was baptized by Ambrose, the bishop of Milan.

When we read the book of Acts, we hear the stories of so many people who heard the Good News of Jesus and then it seems we never hear of them again. This story of the Lord converting sinners into believers has been going on since the Lord sent His apostles to preach in all the world. Sometimes a conversion is very dramatic, the fruit of the hard work of some faithful preacher. Sometimes it is less well known, the result of the lesser known but still mighty work of a parent praying to the Lord for her child, or grandparents for grandchildren, or a husband for a wife.

The truth is, parents often pray for their children to remain in the Christian faith or to become Christian. It is a tireless effort on the part of family members, imploring the Lord for their loved ones to be saved. It often seems fruitless or pointless but it can never be so. It can't be when Jesus our High Priest never fails to pray for us, reminding His Father that because of His Cross and empty tomb, because of His water, Word, and Body and Blood, the Father must save us! So we pray, clinging to those promises, asking that the Lord be faithful in also saving the ones we love! In the Name 轸 of Jesus. Amen.

Oh, blest the parents who give heed Unto their children's foremost need And weary not of care or cost, May none to them and heav'n be lost!  
(“Oh, Blest the House” LSB 862, st.3)
Augustine of Hippo, Pastor and Theologian
AUGUST 28, 2020

Daily Lectionary: 1 Kings 11:1-26; 2 Corinthians 6:1-18

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Augustine, bishop of Hippo (a town in North Africa in the fourth century AD) was not always a pastor. He had not always even been a Christian. But like Saul, who we also know as Paul, Augustine was brought by the Holy Spirit from being a pagan blasphemer who lived for himself, to one of the greatest pastors and theologians the Church has known. It was Augustine’s emphasis on grace that gave Martin Luther the foundation later on for reminding the Church that it is not by our works but by what Jesus has done that we are saved.

For Paul, “Now is the day of salvation.” Don’t wait! Believe in Jesus! Now and every day. Many Christians are Christians from their new birth in Holy Baptism when they were babies. Many Christians don’t come to believe in Jesus until later in life. The point is that when the Holy Spirit brings a person to faith in Christ, that is the day of salvation!

Salvation doesn’t come because we have good morals or character or because it’s a reward for our doing good things. It comes to us by grace. God is gracious, sending His own Son without our even asking, to be the Lamb who takes away our sins on Calvary. Without our contributions, He washes away our sins at the font; without our contributing, Jesus gives us His Body and Blood to eat and drink. Everything we have from Him is a gift. Undeserved. By grace. No strings attached.

That’s the Good News that Augustine learned and which he later taught and preached. It’s the same Good News that still today makes you and me God’s dear and precious and holy people. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

By grace I’m saved, grace free and boundless; My soul, believe and doubt it not. Why stagger at this word of promise? Has Scripture ever falsehood taught? No! Then this word must still remain: By grace you too will life obtain. (“By Grace I’m Saved” LSB 566, st.1)
The Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist
AUGUST 29, 2020

Today’s Reading: Mark 6:14-29
Daily Lectionary: 1 Kings 11:42-12:19; 2 Corinthians 7:1-16

Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded [John’s] head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

(Matthew 6:27-29)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. John was the fiery prophet at the Jordan preaching the coming Messiah who would burn those who did not repent and bear fruit. John was the faithful preacher who told sinners of God’s grace and baptized them in the Jordan, washing away their sins. John was the voice crying the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. He was the preacher who pointed out the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He was the pastor who called Herod to repentance for taking his brother’s wife. John was the last prophet of the Old Testament and the first preacher of the New Testament.

For all that, he died miserably by having his head chopped off while in Herod’s dungeon. Don’t be surprised. Being a Christian means all the glory and majesty and honor of Christ heaped upon you as a child of the King of Kings. And with that you just might die sadly or miserably or forgotten, because the life that Jesus brings us is not a life that turns everything in this life perfect. Being a follower of Jesus is not an escape from the evil things or people of this world. The death and resurrection of Jesus guarantee that your death will end in resurrection, but they don’t promise that your life will be easy or comfortable or happy.

John trusted in one thing, one Person: Jesus. Jesus is all he had to preach and all He had to trust in. Same for us. Strip everything away and all we’ve got is Jesus. But if Jesus rose victorious from the dead, so will John. So will you. So will all His people. Just as the world wanted to get rid of Jesus, so it will try to get rid of you, maybe mildly by just ignoring you, maybe violently by persecuting and killing you. John had Jesus. You have Jesus. That means the world can’t have you. You belong to Him and are safe in Him forever, just like John the Baptist. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Our thanks for John the Baptist Who, till his dying day, Made straight paths for the Savior And heralded His way! In witnessing to Jesus Through times of threat or shame May we with faith and courage The Lamb of God proclaim.

(“By All Your Saints in Warfare” LSB 518, st.24)
Today’s Reading: Mark 7:31-37

Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.  

(Mark 7:35)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Our English Bible tells us that this man’s tongue was loosed by Jesus and he spoke “plainly.” But the Greek word is “orthos” as in “orthodox.” He didn’t speak plainly, he spoke correctly: He spoke truth. How can a guy who is not schooled in the Torah of Israel say anything right about God? Because God-in-the-flesh is the One who opened His mouth.

“O Lord, open my lips; and my mouth shall declare your praise.” Here’s the truth: Without Jesus’ dying for our sins, without His resurrection from the dead, and without the preaching of this Good News and faith given by the Holy Spirit, we could never say anything right about God at all! Just think of all the opinions and ideas about God that people express. You could almost think that there are as many “gods” as there are people with opinions in this world! How do we sort the truth from lies?

Jesus has to open your lips. He has to open your ears to His Word and then that Word, by the Spirit, comes out of your mouth. Think about when you pray and sing the liturgy at church. You hear God’s Word. Gods’ Word comes out. The hymns and canticles and order of service we sing is the very Word of God that goes in our ears and comes out of our mouths. We could never do that apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Just as that man could not hear anything or say anything right until Jesus healed Him, so we, in our sins, can’t hear and can’t speak.

In the waters of Holy Baptism, your ears were opened and your tongue was loosed. In the Supper your Lord has touched your tongue with His own flesh and blood. Now your ears and mouth are servants of God, designed to hear His Word and to speak His Word and praises. This is the gift and work of Jesus. It’s possible because that is how He works, to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and merciful God, whose gift it is that Your faithful possess all things pertaining to faith and life, we implore You that we may so faithfully cling to Your promises in this life that we fail not finally to attain to Your heavenly glory; 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 12th Sunday after Trinity)
Today’s Reading: Isaiah 29:17-24
Daily Lectionary: 1 Kings 16:29-17:24; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

But when he sees his children, The work of My hands, in his midst, They will hallow My name, And hallow the Holy One of Jacob, And fear the God of Israel.  
(Isaiah 29:23)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. It was a poor nobody whom Jesus healed by opening his ears and mouth. This is how the Lord operates. He finds those who have no hope in themselves, who have nothing apart from what the Lord gives them. Then He makes them a part of His family by His grace. He delivers to them the Good News that His death was for them and His resurrection saves them, too.

The prophet Isaiah preaches that the Lord will do this and God’s people will hallow His Name because they see that He grows His family by forgiving sinners and making them a part of His family. Consider your church for a minute. Do you like the people there? Are there members your age? Does everyone get along? Do you know the names of those little kids who sit behind you? How about that old widow who never misses a Sunday? The kid that keeps to himself and rarely makes it to youth group? Do you know that couple who sits on the other side of the aisle? Whoever they are, they all have this in common: God has made them His dear and beloved children through Jesus, just as He has made you His child. We may not always know or even like the people at church but we are all precious in His sight because we are God’s children.

When Jesus hung on the Cross of Calvary, He was hanging there for you. He was hanging there for them, too. He was hanging there as the Lamb of God for the whole world. His water and Word and Body and Blood make them holy as they make you holy. No matter who they are, how young or old, how nice or strange, these are your brothers and sisters in Christ. The Church is pretty cool like that. The Lord takes all kinds of people who have this in common: They are sinners. And He does the same good work of saving them so that they all have this in common: They are part of His family in Jesus Christ. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

I love Your Church, O God, Your saints in ev’ry land, Dear as the apple of Your eye And graven on Your hand.  
(“I Love Your Kingdom, Lord” LSB 651, st.3)
Today's Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:4-11
Daily Lectionary: 1 Kings 18:1-19; Ephesians 1:1-23

But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?

(2 Corinthians 3:7-8)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The Law of God is really neat. You could even call it good and wise. In the Law, God teaches us that the most important thing is to love Him with all our hearts. Not only that, He also teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves, maybe even more than ourselves. The whole point of the Law is to show us what it means to love. We learn that we love God by clinging to His Name, and hearing and believing His Word. We learn to love our neighbor by doing no harm to him but by preserving and protecting his people and property and helping him in every way. The Law is brilliant! If we lived and did what it said, what a wonderful world it would be!

If that’s awesome, glorious, and wonderful, how much more so the Gospel, the Good News that when we completely blew it according to the Law, the Lord came to rescue us from the punishments of the Law by keeping the Law Himself, and making us new creations in Him! If the Law is awesome how much more so the Gospel, the Good News!

This is Paul’s point. The Law of God, His holy commandments, are great. But since we cannot keep them, since we have fallen short, what’s even greater is the mercy and grace given to us in and through His Son who kept the Law completely and who gave His life for us and rose again. If you thought that was great, it just keeps going. Because now He has baptized you and claimed you as one for whom He died. He has fed and absolved you. Jesus came to tell us, “Yes, the Law is awesome and great. If only you could keep it. So here’s even better news: I’ll take care of that and of you. And then I’ll give you my Spirit so that you’ll actually think the Law is awesome and desire to love God with all your heart, and your neighbor, too.” In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

To Jesus we for refuge flee Who from the curse has set us free And humbly worship at His throne, Saved by His grace through faith alone.

(“The Law of God is Good and Wise” LSB 579, st.6)
**Today's Reading:** Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar

**Daily Lectionary:** 1 Kings 18:20-40; Ephesians 2:1-22

*What is the Sacrament of the Altar? It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.*

(Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar, pt. 1)

In the Name ¶ of Jesus. Amen. All the questions we could have about Communion are answered by Jesus’ Words which give us His Body and Blood to eat and drink.

What is it? His Body and Blood. Just as the Passover lamb was killed and eaten, so Jesus is killed for our sin on Calvary and gives us His Body and Blood to eat in this special way. If it were not Jesus’ Body and Blood, what good would it be? When the Passover lamb was slain, the Israelites didn’t go out for pizza! They ate the flesh and blood of the lamb by which they were saved.

Who gave it to us? Jesus Himself! The divine, eternal Son of God who made all things and became man, whose Word brings into existence out of nothing, the Word that heals and speaks forgiveness—that Jesus, that Word declares what this special gift is: His very Body and Blood.

Where is it? Under the bread and wine. So that we may eat and drink with our mouths this wonderful and special gift, the Lord gives it to us with the Passover food of bread and wine. It’s a way for us to physically eat and drink and thus receive the gift of His Body and Blood which He gives.

What do we do with it? Eat it and drink it. In this way, we know it is ours. Christ, whose very flesh and blood are under the bread and wine, now dwells in us. It’s a sacramental joining, a mysterious union by which we can be certain that this gift is real and truly gives what He says it does.

The same Jesus who died on the Cross as the Lamb of God who takes way the sin of the world forgives your sins by this special gift of His Body and Blood for you to eat and drink. In the Name ¶ of Jesus. Amen.

*Yet is God here? Oh, yes! By Word and promise clear, In mouth and soul He makes us whole—Christ, truly present in this meal, O taste and see- the Lord is real.*

(“What Is This Bread” LSB 629, st.4)
Thursday of the 12th Week after Trinity  
SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

**Daily Lectionary:** 1 Kings 19:1-21; Ephesians 3:1-21

Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.  
(1 Kings 19:16)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Israel in the days of Elijah was a rough place to live if you were a faithful follower of God. Jezebel, the wicked queen to King Ahab, was a worshipper of the false gods Baal, Asherah, and many others. She had one goal: to make life miserable for Elijah, the faithful prophet. But the Lord told Elijah he would have a successor, Elisha, who would also be a prophet.

That’s how it is in this world. No matter how nasty people get towards God’s people, no matter how much they try to shut them up or persecute them or even kill them to get rid of them—the Lord still keeps sending preachers to call them to repentance and faith.

The Lord sent one prophet after another. Sometimes Israel listened and repented. Sometimes they killed the prophet. Then Jesus came in fulfillment of all the prophets had foretold, to do the work God has always promised. He, too, was persecuted and put to death by His own people. He rose again on the Third Day, and by His death and resurrection brought salvation for the whole world.

Even though the world at best doesn’t really care, or at worst is hostile, Jesus sent His apostles out and they ordained more pastors. No matter what events have happened in this world and throughout history, the world has never lacked preachers to proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. The Lord continues to have patience with and mercy on this world by sending preachers to proclaim the forgiveness of sins and deliver it by Jesus’ water, Word, Body and Blood.

Regardless of what is going on in the world, no matter how favorable or hostile it seems to religion, whether people listen or stop up their ears, Jesus makes sure His Good News is being preached so that sinners are saved. He will keep on doing that until He comes again in glory so that the Good News will always be proclaimed in this world. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

*Built on the Rock the Church shall stand Even when steeples are falling.  
Crumbled have spires in ev’ry land; Bells still are chiming and calling, Calling the young and old to rest, But above all the souls distressed, Longing for rest everlasting.*  
(“Built on the Rock” LSB 645, st.1)
Friday of the 12th Week after Trinity
SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 2:1-18; Ephesians 4:1-24

...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

(Ephesians 4:22-24)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Old man. New Man. Bad you. Good you. God-hater. God-lover. Self-worshipper. Worshipper of the Lord. That’s our battle. That’s our struggle. Within us are two natures. One is the sinful flesh, corrupted by the lusts of sin and the lies of the devil, wrecked and ruined by the Fall and inherited by each of us since Adam and Eve. The other is the new man, the new creation, born in us from above by water and the Spirit, the renewed self who is made alive by Christ through the gifts of His forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Paul is not just giving us a holy pep talk here! This is the language of the life of Baptism! Each day our old man is drowned by our Baptism. Each day our new man loves God and others. Of course, the two are constantly battling it out.

This is why the catechism says to begin each day and end each day with the sign of the holy cross in remembrance of Baptism. In the morning we pray, “Lord, put to death this nasty person in me so that he doesn’t cause trouble and wreck someone’s life. Let my new self go forth and love and be good to others, always reflecting Your light and love.”

At the end of the day we say, “Lord, forgive me all the mischief and sin this old creature in me has done today and let my new self fall asleep peacefully in the confidence of your love and forgiveness.”

That’s the pattern of our baptismal life, made possible by the blood of Jesus that He shed on Calvary, and the power of His resurrected triumph over death. Paul isn’t just giving some directions on how to be a better person. He’s telling you that this is who you are in Christ, made new and truly righteous and holy in Jesus. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

In Baptism we now put on Christ—Our shame is fully covered With all that He once sacrificed And freely for us suffered. For here the flood of His own blood Now makes us holy, right, and good Before our heav’nly Father.

(“All Christians Who Have Been Baptized” LSB 596, st.4)
Today’s Reading: Introit for the 13th Sunday after Trinity
(Psalm 74:1-2, 19b, 21b; antiphon: v. 20a, 21a, 22a, 23a)

O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, The tribe of Your inheritance, which You have redeemed—This Mount Zion where You have dwelt.
(From the Introit for the 13th Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. It’s no secret that the world hates God’s people. What’s troubling is when it seems like God doesn’t pay attention to what happens to us! That was often the cry of His people Israel!

By the time of Zacharias and Elizabeth, 400 years had passed without a word from the Lord. The Jews were living under the heavy hand of the Roman Empire and her governors. It would be understandable to think they had been forgotten even by God. But then at just the right time, the Son was conceived in Mary’s womb and God arrived in the flesh to save His people and the world.

Even more so than wizards, the Lord is never early or late, but always arrives precisely when He means to. When we hear these words in the Introit tomorrow, the Lord will answer them quickly, immediately following them up with His Word, the sermon of Good News and the Holy Supper of Jesus’ Body and Blood.

That’s because the Lord has not forgotten His people. He doesn’t forget His Church and He doesn’t forget you. If it ever feels like He’s not out there, that He’s not paying attention, then be there in His Church as you make the sign of the holy cross and remember your Baptism. Be there as the pastor makes that same sign of the cross when he absolves you of your sins. Be there as the Good News of Jesus’ death and resurrection is declared for you. Be there to feast upon Jesus’ Body and Blood. Where the Lord Himself is present with His people, He can’t possibly have forgotten them!

The holy Christian Church is the Mount Zion where God dwells and brings peace to His people. Peace to you. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Savior, since of Zion’s city I through grace a member am, Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in Your name. Fading are the world’s vain pleasures, All their boasted pomp and show; Solid joys and lasting treasures, None but Zion’s children know. (“Glorious Things of You Are Spoken” LSB 648, st.4)
Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 4:8-22, 32-37; Ephesians 5:15-33

But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”
(Luke 10:29)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. The man wanted to justify himself. Don’t we all? We want God and everyone else to know why we do what we do, why we behave the way we do, why we should be excused for anything we do wrong and rewarded for anything we do right. We want God to think we are good people and therefore deserve to go to heaven.

This young man wanted to justify himself, too. Easy! Just do what the Law says. Love God and love your neighbor. No problem, as long as my neighbor is someone easy to love, right? I mean, I don’t have to love people I don’t like, right?

The story of the Good Samaritan is the way that Jesus turns the tables on the guy who wants to justify himself. Priest? Didn’t help the guy. Levite? Didn’t help the guy. Samaritan? He helped. There you go, right? Be like the Samaritan and help others. Except the guy who wants to justify himself isn’t the Samaritan. He’s the guy in the ditch! The guy who got beat up and can’t save himself and is going to die if someone doesn’t help him!

That’s the young man talking. That’s you and me. The devil comes along and trips us up into sin. The Law passes by and says, “Help yourself and keep the commandments.” We can’t. We’re bleeding out. We’re doomed. Jesus shows up. He saves us. He gives His life for us and rises again. He brings us to His Church and pours in the oil and wine of our Baptism and His Supper. He puts us in the care of His pastors until He comes again. That’s how you’re saved, not because you’re a good person, and not because you can somehow justify yourself.

We can’t justify ourselves. Jesus justifies us. He saves us. Where the Law would pass us by and leave us to die, Jesus tends to us and cares for us, at His own expense, the expense of His very life! That is what saves us. Who is your neighbor? Jesus, who rescues you from the ditch of sin and death!

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity, and as we do obtain that which You promise, make us to love that which You command; 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 13th Sunday after Trinity)
Today’s Reading: 2 Chronicles 28:8-15
Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 4:48-5:8; Ephesians 6:1-24

Then the men who were designated by name rose up and took the captives, and from the spoil they clothed all who were naked among them, dressed them and gave them sandals, gave them food and drink, and anointed them; and they let all the feeble ones ride on donkeys. So they brought them to their brethren at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria.

(2 Chronicles 28:15)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. While it is true that Jesus is the Good Samaritan who rescues us, there is also a call to love our neighbor. Implicit in the young man’s question to Jesus was the idea that there could be someone who you don’t like who doesn’t have to count as your neighbor. During some of the fighting in the Old Testament, some captives of Judah were helped by the very people who should have been their enemies: Israelites from Samaria. Why would they do such a thing?

Those who have been loved by Jesus in turn love others. He doesn’t love us because we deserve it, because we earned His favor, or because He sees our potential. He loves us because He loves the world in this way: by obeying His Father and giving Himself into death to save sinners. To put it another way, Jesus loves you by saving you even though you don’t deserve it!

That becomes an example for us. The Law is not teaching us to love others in order to justify ourselves, because we are trying to get on God’s good side, or to avoid punishment. This isn’t some transactional game where we do something to get something. The Samaritans helped their neighbors because those people needed food and clothing. Jesus helps us, who need to be saved from sin and death. We help our neighbor who needs clothing or food, or a comforting word, or forgiveness, or money, or a hug, or whatever.

We don’t have to like the people around us. We should. But that’s pretty tough. You can always love them, however. No matter who they are, ask, “What do they need and how can I help them?” You do this not because they deserve it, but because like you, they have been loved and redeemed by Jesus. That’s not justifying yourself. That’s just being loving toward your neighbor, with the very love Christ has for you! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Lord, let me win my foes With kindly words and actions. And let me find good friends For counsel and correction. Help me, as You have taught, To love both great and small And by You Spirit’s might To live in peace with all.

(“O God, My Faithful God” LSB 696, st.4)
Today's Reading: Galatians 3:15-22  
Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 5:9-27; Philippians 1:1-20

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.  
(Galatians 3:19)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. True or False: God would not have given us the Ten Commandments if we could not keep them. How you answer this question shows whether you believe in a religion of obedience that will be rewarded or a faith that clings to grace that is given to the undeserving. If we could keep the commandments, if it were possible to obey the Law and to love God and our neighbor on our own strength and willpower, then we would not need Jesus. It's as simple as that.

So if we can't keep the Law, why did God give it? Why does He tell us to love Him and others if we can't even do it? Paul tells us: He gives us those commandments to show us that we can't fulfill them, and that if we can't, we're doomed unless God Himself saves us. So the Law was given to increase our trespasses. It was given to show us that we are sinners who need a Savior.

There is a promise in the Law: Do this and you will live. But that promise is made to the Seed of Abraham, Jesus. He keeps the Law and lives. He carries our not doing the Law and dies. He lives because His blood has washed away our sins and because He has kept the Law perfectly.

Do you keep the Law? According to your sinful flesh and your sinful actions, no way. According to your Baptism, Absolution, and the Body and Blood of Jesus, you absolutely do, because He did! In other words, whatever the Law condemns in you, it condemns in Jesus on Good Friday. Whatever the Law promises, it promises to you through Jesus so that His obedience and perfection count for you.

Whenever we take hold of the Law apart from Jesus, we'll wreck things. We'll either despair because we can’t do it, or we’ll try to justify ourselves. But in Jesus, the Law is handled and does what it is given to do. It gives its curse and promise to Jesus who keeps the curse for Himself and shares its promise with you. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Our works cannot salvation gain; They merit only endless pain. Forgive us, Lord! To Christ we flee, Who pleads for us endlessly. Have mercy, Lord!  
(“These Are the Holy Ten Commands” LSB 581, st.12)
Today’s Reading: Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar  

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking? These words, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.  
(Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar, pt.2)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Bread, but barely. Wine, but probably not the kind that tastes good. Kneeling while the pastor gives you a wafer and a sip from the chalice. Looks like a pious ritual. What’s the big deal? It’s not what we see, but what the Word of Jesus says is going on. That’s bread and wine which are also His Body and Blood. There is a gift there that we don’t see with our eyes. It is the gift of the flesh and blood of the Lamb of God who has taken away our sins.

Are your sins forgiven? Does God really forget about all the bad stuff you’ve done? How do you know? How can you be sure? Have you eaten and drunk the Body and Blood of Christ? Then, yep, your sins are forgiven, because Jesus says so!

Do you have eternal life? Will you really come back to life on the last day? Is your transformed body really going to come out of the grave? Is there really a paradise in the presence of God that you will enjoy forever and ever and ever? Have you eaten and drunk the Body and Blood of Christ? Then you have life! Eternal life. Everlasting life! Because Jesus says so!

Are you saved? Do you really belong to God and not the devil? Are you really immune to everything this world throws at you so none of it can keep you from heaven? Have you eaten and drunk the Body and Blood of Jesus? Then yes, you are saved. You have salvation, because Jesus says so!

That’s the gist of all this. Jesus’ words give us His Body and Blood and His words tell what that Body and Blood give us. Forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. After all, where there is forgiveness of sins, there’s always life and salvation, too! In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Firmly hold with faith unshaken That this food is to be taken By the sick who are distressed, By hearts that long for peace and rest.  
(“Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior” LSB 627, st.5)
Then he arose and went into the house. And he poured the oil on his head, and said to him, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘I have anointed you king over the people of the Lord, over Israel. You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel.’”

(2 Kings 9:6-7)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. The history of Israel (the ten northern tribes that split from Judah and Benjamin) is one of wicked king after wicked king. The Lord continued to send prophets to the evil kings to call them to repentance and urge them to return to following the true God. They didn’t, and they persecuted and killed the Lord’s preachers, besides. When God got angry enough, He would send along the next king and usually by violence against the current king, the new one would take over. It was God’s judgment on His wicked people.

God doesn’t put up with sin. He punishes it. The record of Israel is a warning, but it’s also a foreshadowing. When Jesus came, the Promise that He fulfilled is that He would be the guy to take all of God’s anger. Bad king? May as well be Jesus! Evil deeds? Put them on Jesus! The sin of the world? Lay it on the Lamb of God. Your sins? Pile them on the Son of God. That’s the deal. He gets them all so we are relieved of their burden and curse.

That’s how the Lord always dealt with His people. But those who didn’t want His mercy got His wrath. It’s the same for those who reject Jesus. Don’t want your sins on Jesus? Don’t want them forgiven? Yikes! Why wouldn’t you! God will let those who think like that have their way. You, however, He has called by water and Word out from under His judgment and into His life, to be a part of His family. Jesus, the good King, died like a wicked King to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords who has conquered sin and death and made you a part of His kingdom of everlasting life. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

O Jesus, King most wonderful! O Conqueror renowned! O Source of peace ineffable, In whom all joys are found.

("O Jesus, King Most Wonderful" LSB 554, st.1)
Friday of the 13th Week after Trinity
SEPTEMBER 11, 2020

Daily Lectionary: 2 Chronicles 29:1-24; Philippians 3:1-21

Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the East Square, and said to them: “Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy place.” (2 Chronicles 29:4-5)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy all describe and detail how the services of the Lord should be held, how the tabernacle and its furniture should be built, what sacrifices were to be made, how the priests would dress and what their duties were, what feasts and festivals the people were to observe, and how the priests and people were to worship the Lord.

Once they got settled in the Promised Land, they pretty much did mostly none of that! Over time, the temple fell into disrepair and the people forgot God Himself, much less how to come and receive His gifts. King Hezekiah saw that and said, “We gotta fix this! Okay, you priests, time to get to work to clean up the temple and make it a place where the Lord’s gifts are celebrated and received!”

Jesus is the true Temple, the true dwelling place of God. And in true sinful fashion, His people trashed the Temple. They slapped Him around and nailed Him to the cross. Yet the Father restored that Temple when He raised His Son to life on the Third Day!

Now, by the blood of Jesus, He cleans us up and dwells with us. Through water and the Word, and His Body and Blood, He wipes out the rubbish of our sin and dwells in us, making us living stones who together make up the holy Temple of His Body, the Church. It’s quite a transformation!

Now every day is a call from Hezekiah to clean things up! Each day is a call to repentance and faith in Jesus, who lives in you and dwells among His people in His gifts. The temple was the center of Israel’s worship because that’s where Yahweh Himself was. Now, wherever Jesus is, He is among us with good gifts of life and salvation. You are the dwelling place of God because Jesus lives in you by grace! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

To this temple, where we call You, Come, O Lord of hosts, and stay; Come with all Your loving kindness, Hear Your people as they pray; And Your fullest benediction Shed within these walls today.

(“Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation” LSB 909, st.2)
Today’s Reading: Introit for the 14th Sunday after Trinity  
(Psalm 84:1-2a, 4, 10b, 11b; antiphon: vs. 9-10a)  
Daily Lectionary: 2 Chronicles 31:1-21; Philippians 4:1-23  

For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.  
(From the Introit for the 14th Sunday after Trinity)  

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Where would you like to be on Sunday morning? In church? Under your covers? At a friend’s house? Somewhere else doing something fun? The psalmist thinks there’s no better place to be than in God’s house. He’d rather be a doorkeeper (like an usher at church?) even though that’s a little job in the temple, than be where the wicked are.  

For Christians now, this psalm isn’t just about going to a particular building. The Temple is Jesus. To desire the Temple is to desire Jesus. Better to be where Jesus is than anywhere else. After all, where else can you have your sins washed away? Where else will the Lord’s herald proclaim your divine pardon? Where else will you enjoy a feast of salvation that promises eternal life? Nowhere else but where Jesus is!  

Tomorrow, these words of the psalms, sung in the Introit, will drag us into God’s house and lift up our heads and open our ears to the wonderful gifts that Jesus gives when we are there with Him. His Word, water, Body, and Blood, the good news of His death and resurrection to save you and the world, the joyful fellowship of fellow sinners who have been redeemed by Jesus: All these things await you in the Lord’s house when you go to worship. That’s better than any other place you can go! In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.  

This day God’s people meeting, His Holy Scripture hear; His living presence greeting, Through bread and wine made near. We journey on believing, Renewed with heav’nly might, From grace more grace receiving, On this blest day of light.  
(“O Day of Rest and Gladness” LSB 906, st.3)
The 14th Sunday after Trinity
SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

**Today’s Reading:** Luke 17:11-19
**Daily Lectionary:** 2 Chronicles 32:1-22; Colossians 1:1-23

“Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.” (Luke 17:18-19)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Do we think the other nine lepers weren’t grateful or thankful that Jesus healed them? I’m sure they were! I’m sure they were ecstatic that they didn’t have leprosy anymore. But Jesus isn’t asking why they didn’t come back to say “Thank you!” He’s asking why only one came back to “give glory to God.” To “give glory to God” isn’t just being polite and minding our manners, and saying, “Thank you.” To give God glory is to recognize that the Son of God in the flesh is God with us and He’s the most important thing we need.

What this Samaritan realizes that the others don’t seem to, is that if Jesus can heal leprosy, He can save sinners. He realizes that he doesn’t just need Jesus to make his nasty flesh disease go away. He needs Jesus for everything, to be His Savior from sin and death.

We often do this: We cry out to the Lord to save us, fix us, help us, rescue us, deliver us. Then, when things are better or back to the way we want them, we sort of tuck Jesus away until we need Him again. The Samaritan realizes he needs Jesus all the time! His example teaches us to repent of being like those guys who just get what they want and then off they go. The Samaritan teaches us that Jesus is the true High Priest who heals us and pronounces us clean from our sins.

That’s because the Son of God doesn’t just cleanse leprosy, but He also takes away our sins. By His Cross and empty tomb, and His water, Word, and Body and Blood, He pronounces you clean. When He tells the Samaritan, “Your faith has saved you,” it’s the same as if He says, “Your Jesus has saved you. And I’ll always keep saving you. Stick close!” And He always will. Now go: your faith, your Jesus, has saved you. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

*Keep, we implore You, O Lord, Your Church with Your perpetual mercy; and because the frailty of mankind without You cannot but fall, keep us ever by Your help from all things hurtful and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; 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 14th Sunday after Trinity)*
Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

(John 12:24)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. We take the cross for granted, as if it’s not an awful symbol of death. What if the main symbol of Christianity were an electric chair or hangman’s noose, or a guillotine, or a lethal injection needle? Would that be weird? The cross is exactly that: a means of execution—and a painful and awful execution at that! It’s a symbol of death.

Perhaps the reason we cherish the cross as the symbol of the Christian faith is that no matter how awful, evil, painful, and terrible that death of Jesus was on that Cross, its purpose and what it accomplished was to save us from our sins, to rescue us from eternal judgment and to give us everlasting life. In other words, what was an instrument of torture and death, God Himself turned into the symbol of salvation and life.

A cross seems like a bad thing, but Jesus turns it into Good News. Jesus, obeying His Father, submitted Himself to the shame and agony of that Roman Cross in order to save you. That’s not a call to feel sorry for Jesus or guilty He had to do that for you. It’s simply the confession of faith that by His death, Jesus saves you.

That Cross shows up in our lives as Christians. It’s traced upon you in Holy Baptism. It’s put before your eyes when your pastor absolves you. It’s again set before you when being dismissed from the meal of salvation at the Lord’s altar. Even our churches are often built to make the Cross and what Jesus did upon it the center of our life and worship. Not only do we have many crosses in church, but the font, altar, pulpit and lectern, the main parts of the sanctuary, are often arranged so that they form the shape of a cross. The cross is the symbol of our salvation for it was upon the Cross that Jesus died to bring forgiveness and life to you. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Faithful cross, true sign of triumph, Be for all the noblest tree; None in foliage, none in blossom, None in fruit thine equal be; Symbol of the world's redemption, For the weight that hung on thee!

(“Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle: LSB 454, st.4)
Today’s Reading: Proverbs 4:10-23
Daily Lectionary: 2 Chronicles 34:1-4, 8-11, 14-33; Colossians 2:8-23

But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble. (Proverbs 4:18-19)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Ethics. Morality. Virtue. “Good decisions.” The world is full of advice on how to get through life successfully and with minimal conflict and irritation. Many people read the book of Proverbs and think that’s what is being taught: a religious take on “self-help” and “worldly wisdom.” But that’s not it.

True wisdom is faith in Jesus Christ. It is the knowledge that apart from Jesus we are nothing but condemned sinners who have nothing and live by nothing other than our own selfishness. To have the light of Christ through faith is to acknowledge that it is God alone who saves us and gives us life and strength and patience to live life in this world.

Christians often say, “I just don’t know how people survive without Jesus. Without the Bible. Without church.” Sure, that sort of thought could be tweaked to remind them that our Old Adam deserves nothing but death. Yet there’s some truth in that without Jesus there really is nothing but death and condemnation.

Jesus came to take away our sins. He came to shelter us from God’s judgment against our disobedience. He came to give us righteousness and everlasting life. Sure, you can live in this world without those things, but that’s a downward spiral that ends up in hell. And just because we have those gifts, doesn’t mean our life is suddenly easy and carefree. Rather, the wisdom of faith is that we have the bigger perspective: God is the One who created us and all things and it is God Himself who sent His Son to redeem us and make all things new. That is Good News that is put upon us in Baptism and confirmed by preaching and the Supper. It’s Good News and wisdom that get us through the world, not by our practicing “virtues” or “morals,” but by living in the salvation Jesus gives. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Save us from weak resignation To the evils we deplore; Let the gift of Your salvation Be our glory evermore. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, Serving You whom we adore, Serving You whom we adore.

(“God of Grace and God of Glory” LSB 850, st.4)
How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: “forgiveness of sins.” (Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar, pt.3)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The promise of the Sacrament of the Altar not just that it’s Jesus’ Body and Blood. His Word also tells us why it works and what it does: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” Those words are full of the very promises of the Son of God who made all things.

It was the Word of God, after all, which said, “Let there be plants according to their kind: including wheat, and grapes.” When the Lord spoke that Word, those things came to be. It was the Word of God which told Mary, “You will conceive in your womb and bear a Son.” Sure enough, Mary conceived the Son in her womb. It was the Word which Jesus spoke, “This is my Body; this is my Blood,” which gives to us His flesh and blood under the bread and wine. So it is His Body and Blood. And it is His Word that says it’s for your forgiveness.

You don’t receive forgiveness just because you eat and drink, but because Jesus promises that forgiveness to you. Of course, you believe that, because you eat and drink it! But it’s not our doing it that makes it so. It’s true and real because Jesus’ words say so.

As God’s people, marked by the Cross of our Savior who died and rose, and washed by the water and the Spirit, we believe things are what Jesus says they are because He’s Jesus. He’s the divine, eternal, Son of God in the flesh and His Word always does what it says. And what He says about His Supper is that it is for you, for your forgiveness, for you to have eternal life. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

We dare not ask how this can be, But simply hold the mystery And trust this word where life begins: “Given and shed for all your sins.”

(“The Death of Jesus Christ Our Lord” LSB 634, st.5)
Thursday of the 14th Week after Trinity  
SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

**Today’s Reading:** Galatians 5:16-24  
**Daily Lectionary:** 2 Chronicles 36:1-23; Colossians 4:1-18

*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*  
(Galatians 5:25-26)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Paul’s lists of the works of the flesh is not exhaustive. I’m sure you could have a lot more sins listed there. But the works of the flesh all have one thing in common: They are selfish. They are all about pleasing ourselves. They are about putting ourselves first and ahead of everyone else. Lust, coveting, anger, and all the rest are all about giving me what I want no matter who gets hurt. Those desires, along with the idol we make of ourselves, need to be crucified with Christ and drowned by the Spirit in Baptism.

The gifts of the Spirit, on the other hand, are self-LESS. They put God and others first, ahead of ourselves. That’s why there are fruits of the Spirit. The Spirit grows in us those fruits, those gifts and qualities which are from Jesus. By His life and death and resurrection, Jesus never once put Himself first. His first thought was always to glorify the Father and to save us. That selflessness that saves is the very heart of the gifts the Spirit gives to you so that, by the Spirit living in you, your selfishness is crucified and your selflessness cultivated.

The Christian life is one of putting others first. That means putting our Old Adam down every day. Our world is pretty much built on the idea of making ourselves number one. Christ came to put others ahead of Himself. To put you first. You’re first in Jesus’ way of doing things. And His living in you, means that others are first in your way of doing things. This is our baptismal life: Each day we acknowledge the idolatry of self and remember that it is drowned in our Baptism. Each day the Spirit raises up our new creation to glorify God and love others. That’s growing fruit in you for the blessing and benefit of those around you. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

*Grant that Your Spirit’s help To me be always given Lest I should fall again And lose the way to heaven. Grant that He give me strength In my infirmity; May He renew my heart To serve You willingly.*  
(“How Can I Thank You, Lord” LSB 703, st.4)
Friday of the 14th Week after Trinity
SEPTEMBER 18, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 1:1-2:10; 1 Timothy 1:1-20

And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.” (Nehemiah 1:3)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Nehemiah was a faithful follower of God who lived his life in exile. He was the cup-bearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia. Nehemiah knew his people were in captivity because they had turned away from the Lord. But even while they were in exile the Lord was gracious to them. The King permitted Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city, including the temple where God Himself dwelt.

Jesus once told the Jews to tear down the temple and it would be rebuilt in three days. At that time, the temple was the one King Herod had built. But Jesus meant the Temple of His body, which would be killed and then rise again on the Third Day.

From the days of Moses, the tabernacle (tent of meeting), followed by the temple in Jerusalem, was the place where you knew God was. When the Israelites went into exile, it was if God was saying, “I’m not hanging out with you anymore. You don’t want me, so go live where I don’t!” Ouch! But the coming of Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, is the reminder that the Lord might appear to be gone for a time but is always among His people. If He wasn’t there in the temple when they were in exile, He was still there among them in His Word.

The Church is where God is today. The Church is where Jesus is. People seem to think of “God” as someone or something “out there” but Christians know better. God is a person. A human being. Jesus Christ. He is present among us by water, Word, Body and Blood. He is present in His Body, the holy Christian Church.

The thing about the true God is that He’s always been a “somewhere you can find Him” Lord. He doesn’t hide in some other dimension. He’s right here with us. As a man who can be crucified and died and rise again. As one who comes to us with real, physical gifts. There can be no doubt where Jesus is, and where He is, there we have all we need of God: the Savior who never abandons us but is here to forgive and give life. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

God Himself is present: Let us now adore Him And with awe appear before Him. God is in His temple; All within keep silence; Humbly kneel in deepest reverence. He alone On His throne Is Our God and Savior; Praise His Name forever. ("God Himself is Present" LSB 907, st.1)
Today’s Reading: Introit for the 15th Sunday after Trinity  
(Psalm 86:4, 6, 15a, 16; antiphon: v. 1a, 2b, 3)  

Be merciful to me, O Lord, For I cry to You all day long.  
(From the Introit for the 15th Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name • of Jesus. Amen. Do you really cry out to God all day long? Do you even give the Lord a second thought? Ever gone from waking up all the way through the end of the day without evening thinking of the Lord? Without remembering that God created you and gives you what you have every day? Forgetting that you live as one redeemed by Christ the crucified? Without even thinking that you might need the Holy Spirit for your day? Sure we do! That’s why this psalm calls us back in repentance to faith in Jesus and trust in His promises.

Tomorrow we have worship at church. We set aside at least one day a week to go and hear God’s Word and be reminded that we need to cry to Him all the day long. We need to remember that we so easily forget Him, and to be reminded that He’s always around.

More than that, we cry out to God because He’s a God who hears us. When you worship and pray, it never crosses the Lord’s mind to think, “Oh, well, there you are this time! Where have you been?” Nope. Every time you open your mouth in prayer and praise, whether it’s been five minutes or five years, your heavenly Father, who made you His child through the blood of His Son and the water of the holy font, has a smile on His face!

God doesn’t forget us the way we forget Him. He doesn’t ignore us the way we ignore Him. He won’t! He can’t! Not since Jesus died and rose again. That sacrifice of the Lamb of God is your promise that the Lord will never forget you. It’s something we should never forget but the promise is in His remembering us. As long as He remembers us, we’ll be okay. Forgiven. Children of God. Destined for everlasting life. Be merciful to us? God has done exactly that in His Son Jesus. In the Name • of Jesus. Amen.

Today our Father calls us; His Holy Spirit waits; His blessed angels gather Around the heav’nly gates. No question will be asked us How often we have come; Although we oft have wandered, It is our Father’s home.  
(“Today Your Mercy Calls Us” LSB 915, st.3)
The 15th Sunday after Trinity  
SEPTEMBER 20, 2020

**Today’s Reading:** Matthew 6:24-34  
**Daily Lectionary:** Nehemiah 4:7-23; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

*Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*  
(Matthew 6:26)

In the Name ☧ of Jesus. Amen. How do you know that God will take care of you? Look at your car windshield. See? He’s feeding the birds! They’ve got food! So He’ll take care of you, too. Birds have food. Lilies look like they’re dressed beautifully. They are just birds and flowers! You are worth way more to your heavenly Father than those things!

That’s because the Son of God didn’t become a bird or a lily. He became man. A human being. One of us. Like you. He did that so He could take your sin and death and make them His own to rescue you from those things forever.

If God did not spare His own Son but gave Him up to the death of the Cross, don’t you think He’ll make sure you have enough to eat and something to wear? Of course He will. In fact, Jesus is the in-the-flesh proof of the Father’s promise to do what you need Him to: save you from sin and death but also to give you your daily bread and take care of you in this life.

Our Old Adam likes to take the things that God gives us and turn them into the most important. You have to get more food! Get more clothes! Get more stuff! As if the Lord is going to let you starve or run around naked! We trust so much in our stuff that we forget it is the Lord who gives us the things that we need. There’s our repentance: Repent of worry and of trusting in our stuff more than the Lord.


*O Lord, we implore You, let Your continual pity cleanse and defend Your Church, and because she cannot continue in safety without Your help, preserve her evermore by Your help and 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 15th Sunday after Trinity)
Today’s Reading: Matthew 9:9-13

As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him. (Matthew 9:9)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Matthew was a tax collector. He worked for the hated Romans to make sure the Jewish people paid their taxes to the pagan emperor. His job was to tell people what they owed. His job was to collect what was due.

Then Jesus shows up. He calls Matthew from being a tax collector to being an apostle, a witness to His life and death and resurrection, and a preacher of that Good News. Jesus turns Matthew from a guy who tells people what they owe into a herald proclaiming that they no longer owe anything to God. Matthew has gone from being a debt-collector to a debt releaser!

The Greek word “evangelion” is translated “Gospel” and it literally means “Good News.” Not bad news. Not scary news. Good News that cheers our hearts and proclaims something surprising and happy: God has forgiven your debts. They have been paid in full by the blood of Jesus! You owe God nothing. You have been set free.

This was such Good News that Matthew is not only an apostle, a preacher of this Good News to the world, he was also an evangelist, one of the four who wrote it down in the book of the Bible that bears his name.

Matthew’s life changed that day when Jesus called Him. He learned that life is not about collecting but about letting go. The evangelist recorded Jesus’ words that His Supper is given “for the forgiveness of sins” and that disciples would be made by baptizing sinners. That is taking the debts of sinners and stamping them with the great big stamp of “Paid in full” in the ink of Jesus’ blood. Your account is cleared. You owe God nothing. Now you can go and cancel the debts of those around you. They don’t owe the Lord or you. Debts have been cancelled! Sins are forgiven! Thank you, Matthew, for the Good News! In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Praise, Lord, for him whose Gospel Your human life declared, Who, worldly gain forsaking, Your path of suff’ring shared. From all unrighteous mam- mon, O raise our eyes anew That we in our vocation May rise and follow You. (“By All Your Saints in Warfare” LSB 518, st.25)
Today’s Reading: 1 Kings 17:8-16
Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 7:1-4; 8:1-18; 1 Timothy 5:1-16

And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son.” (1 Kings 17:13)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. How rude! Elijah the prophet met a widow and asked for a little something to eat. She had very little left and it was just enough for a last meal with her son. But Elijah insists she make him food first! How rude! Surprisingly, he is not being selfish. He’s teaching her that God promises to take care of her. She prepared food for him and her little jars of oil and flour never ran out until the famine was over!

Do you give an offering at your church? An offering is a sacrifice on our part so that the pastor who takes care of us can be paid and the needs of the church be met: heat, air, electric, and so on. Our offerings make sure our pastor can take care of his family and the church can take care of those in need. So do you give something for an offering?

We don’t give offerings because the Lord needs the money! We give offerings because others do: our pastor, the secretary, people in need, and so on. Giving an offering confesses what we believe about the Lord taking care of us. It says, “If I give up this bit of money, I am trusting the Lord will still take care of me and provide for me.”

After all, He gave you His Son. Sent Him to die for you. Sent Jesus to strip away all those idols we have and think we have to pay for. By rescuing us from the idolatry of worshiping ourselves, Jesus is freeing us up to be good stewards of the gifts He gives us so we can take care of others. Never give money at church because you think God needs it! Give because your neighbor needs it.

The widow in this story first sought the kingdom of God: She wanted to make sure the prophet was taken care of so he could preach. In doing so, she trusted that the Lord would take care of her. And He did! He always will take care of you, too, because you are His baptized, Body- and Blood-fed people. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Hence, all earthly treasure! Jesus is my pleasure; Jesus is my choice. Hence, all empty glory! Naught to me thy story Told with tempting voice. Pain or loss, Or shame or cross, Shall not from my Savior move me Since He deigns to love me. (“Jesus, Priceless Treasure” LSB 743, st.4)
Today’s Reading: Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar
Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 9:1-21; 1 Timothy 5:17-6:2

Who receives this sacrament worthily? Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly 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, pt.4)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. What makes you ready to receive Communion? Being a Lutheran? Memorizing the catechism? Many generations of young people have gone through the grueling experience of memorizing every last word of Luther’s Small Catechism. Many have had to stand in church and have questions hurled at them to see whether they’ve learned it all. Is that what makes you finally “worthy” enough to get Jesus’ Body and Blood?

Learning the catechism is certainly fine training. It’s good to know what God’s Word says. It’s good to memorize the Bible and catechism and hide God’s Word in our hearts. It’s good to be trained in theology and understand that the Bible is all about Jesus.

But that’s not why you get to receive Communion. Jesus says, “This is my Body and my Blood. It’s given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” He has a gift for you. You are worthy to receive that gift, but not because you are a good person. You are worthy to receive that gift, but not because you studied hard and got an “A” on your catechism tests. You’re worthy, but not because you can say every last word of the catechism. You’re worthy because Jesus says you are.

He as much says, “You are a sinner. I am your Savior. I gave Myself into death for your sins. I give you My Body and Blood so you know that forgiveness is truly yours. Eat. Drink. Know that you are forgiven and have eternal life.”

You are truly worthy and well prepared, not because you think you are but because Jesus says you are. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

I do not merit favor, Lord, My weight of sin would break me; In all my guilty heart’s discord, O Lord, do not forsake me. In my distress this comforts me That You receive me graciously, O Christ, my Lord of mercy!

(“Lord Jesus Christ, Life-Giving Bread” LSB 625, st.4)
Thursday of the 15th Week after Trinity
SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

Today’s Reading: Galatians 5:25-6:10
Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 9:22-38; 1 Timothy 6:3-21

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
(Galatians 6:2)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Bear one another’s burdens. Carry their load. What Paul is getting at with those words is all about the forgiveness of sins. People mess up. They drag their sins around. They all have baggage. We all do. The Lord Jesus came to bear our burdens by bearing our sins. On Calvary, our sins were His sins. Our transgressions were His transgressions. Our iniquities were His iniquities. Our burdens were His to bear and leave behind in the grave when He rose on Easter.

When Jesus rose from the dead, He didn’t tell His disciples to go lay more burdens on people. He didn’t tell them to straighten up and fix themselves. He didn’t tell them to let people know they had better get right with God. Jesus sent His preachers to proclaim Good News, that sins are forgiven. Debts are cancelled. Burdens have been lifted and set aside. There is nothing for you to carry that is bad. No need to lift up a heavy load of guilt or shame. No need to struggle under the load of hate and anger toward others. No rack of condemnation is laid upon you. You are free.

In that freedom, because you can leap and skip with no hindrance, you now can lighten the load of those around you. Don’t let them be weighed down with guilt and shame and the burden of their sins. Help them. Bear with them. Help them drop that heavy heap at the foot of the Cross so it can be Jesus’ burden. Don’t press down on them to make their lives harder. Help them see that Jesus has set them free as He has set you free. Washed, absolved, and fed, your burdens have been carried by Jesus. So have theirs. So don’t pile on more, but lift and help them let go. Everyone has burdens. Jesus came to take our burdens from us, so that we could be set free and rejoice in being saved out from under those troubles once and for all. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord, let me win my foes With kindly words and actions, And let me find good friends For counsel and correction. Help me, as You have taught, To love both great and small And by Your Spirit’s might To live in peace with all. (“O God, My Faithful God” LSB 696, st.4)
Friday of the 15th Week after Trinity
SEPTEMBER 25, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Malachi 1:1-14; Matthew 3:1-17

“I have loved you,” says the Lord. “Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’ Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” Says the Lord. “Yet Jacob I have loved; But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness.” (Malachi 1:2-3)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Whoa! Why is the Lord talking about hating someone? He is responding to Israel, who said, “God doesn’t love us!” Really? Have you ever thought that God doesn’t love you? He’s got it in for you? What did you ever do to make God mad at you so that He’s making your life so hard?

That’s not how the Lord operates. He tells His people that though Esau and Jacob were twin brothers, He chose Jacob to be the one to carry the promises of the Savior through His line. Later on, when Esau’s descendant, the nation of Edom, picked on Israel, the Lord saved them. He rescued Israel so that someday from that chosen people, the Savior would be born.

When you think God is against you, stop and remember how He loves you. He loves you by not sparing His own Son but by sending Him to suffering and death. That’s to save you! That sounds awful! Why would the Lord do that? It’s not a macho display of His love. It’s a love that pays the price for our sins.

On Calvary, the Father abandons His Son so that His hatred of sins is taken care of. God the Father chose you over His own Son in that moment. On Good Friday, God the Father makes His Son into sin, into the curse, so that you would be set free.

Your Baptism into Jesus is the Lord’s own promise that He loves you. The pronunciation of Absolution is a promise God loves you. The Body and Blood of Jesus are His pledge and promise that God can never hate you but loves you without measure. If you’re ever not sure of God’s love, look to those gifts of Jesus which deliver His Cross and resurrection to you. Look to those promises by which He says, “Here is how I have loved and always will love you. I’m never against you. I’m always for you to save you and give you eternal life.” In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

The Lord my life arranges; Who can His work destroy? In His good time He changes All sorrow into joy. So let me then be still: My body, soul, and spirit His tender care inherit According to His will.

(“From God Can Nothing Move Me” LSB 713, st.3)
Today's Reading: Introit for the 16th Sunday after Trinity
(Psalm 86:1, 7, 12-13; antiphon: v. 3, 5)
Daily Lectionary: Malachi 2:1-3:5; Matthew 4:1-11

I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore. For great is Your mercy toward me, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
(From the Introit for the 16th Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. We go to birthday parties because we are celebrating a person’s life. We go to graduations because we are celebrating someone’s academic accomplishments. We go to events most often because we are remembering something that happened and celebrating that event: Think of 4th of July fireworks or a Memorial Day parade.

Tomorrow we’ll go to church to celebrate something. We’ll go to remember and to be gathered together with others who are remembering and celebrating. What exactly? We’re celebrating that Jesus died and rose and delivered us from sin and death!

The psalmist reminds us in the words we hear tomorrow that we praise God because of what He’s done for us. We’re excited! We’re glad! We’re happy! Another week has passed during which He’s fed the birds and you. He’s made the flowers grow and clothed you. He’s borne your burdens and helped you help others. He’s taken whatever sins you have and buried them forever with Jesus. He’s raised up the new you in your Baptism and has forgiven you each and every day.

So we’ll be in church tomorrow, praising God with all our hearts and glorifying Him for deliver us from the depths of hell. Left to ourselves, that’s where we would be. Jesus has saved us from all that by His own death and His triumphant resurrection on Easter. Tomorrow, that’s what we’re celebrating. That’s what we’re remembering. That’s what we’re giving thanks for. That’s what we’re getting all excited about and rejoicing over. The Divine Service is a celebration! A party! A foretaste of the Feast to come! It’s a joyous event because we have a gracious Savior who loves us and gave Himself for us. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your great mercy! Bring us to your house to celebrate with all your saints! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

O bless the Lord, my soul! Let all within me join And aid my tongue to bless His name Whose favors are divine. (“O Bless the Lord, My Soul” LSB 814, st.1)
Today's Reading: Luke 7:11-17
Daily Lectionary: Malachi 3:6-4:6; Matthew 4:12-25

When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." (Luke 7:13)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Wait a minute. How is it “compassionate” to tell a woman who has lost her son not to weep? Really, Jesus? She’s a widow, which means she’s already lost her husband. Now she’s lost her only son. And you tell her not to cry?

It’s like Jesus thinks He has power over death or something. Maybe that’s because He knows He will suffer and die, and on the Third Day rise again. He knows that when He is raised from the dead, death has no more dominion over Him. And if death has no dominion over Jesus, it has no power over you, who are baptized into His death and resurrection.

We fear death. We don’t like to think about death. We don’t like to deal with death. But it’s here. All around us. What Jesus teaches us is that rather than accept death as a “natural part of life,” we are to treat it like an enemy who has been defeated and is worth nothing more than ridicule!

Remember when Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead? He told everyone she wasn’t dead but sleeping. When He raised Lazarus, the Lord told His disciples he had been sleeping, too. When the New Testament refers to death, it speaks of “falling asleep.” Why? Because sleep is harmless. You fall asleep and then you wake up. Death is falling asleep. You die and then you wake up and rise from the dead. That is because Jesus triumphed over death and made a spectacle of it.

When you stand in a funeral line and greet the loved ones of the person who died, what do you tell them? “I’m so sorry. My condolences.” I’m sure you don’t tell them not to cry! Try this: Next time you’re at a funeral, tell them, “Christ is risen!” That’s the great Easter greeting that we say to one another in celebration of the fact that Jesus’ grave is empty, He is alive, and now death for you is nothing more than falling asleep for a bit and awakening to the glory of paradise and life everlasting. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, we pray that Your grace may always go before and follow after us, that we may be continually given to all good works; 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 16th Sunday after Trinity)
So she said to Elijah, “What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?”

(1 Kings 17:18)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Yep. A tragedy. The widow’s son died. God must be mad at her. That’s what she thinks. That’s what we think. If something bad happens, we wonder, “What did I do?” That’s how we think God works. That’s pretty much how the world thinks God works, too, which is why most people say they don’t believe in Him.

The Lord allows the woman’s son to die so that Elijah can raise him from the dead. What seems a tragedy is for this woman an example of God’s mercy and love in restoring her son. It’s also a reminder that God will give His own Son into death for the purpose of raising you from the dead.

Death is guaranteed. Nobody gets out of it. It’s going to catch you some day. Could be tomorrow. Could be years from now. One way or another, though, it will come. As we look around and those whom we love die, we wonder if God is angry. Did we do something to make Him mad? That’s the thing about death: We know it happens. We can’t do anything about it.

But Jesus dies so that He can rise. His death is the triumph over death. Without His resurrection, our own death would indeed just be an empty and sad event. But with Jesus’ tomb being empty, we have the promise that our graves will be empty, too. In other words, Jesus rose so that you will rise. If He rose, you will rise. Death really isn’t the last word.

This is the promise of your Baptism, in which you die with Christ the first time. That’s right, you’ve already died, at the font. And you’ve already been raised from the dead, at the font. That way, when you fall asleep in Jesus someday, you will rise to new life forever. It has to happen that way because that’s what Jesus accomplished.

Death does remind us of our sin because sin brought death. But Jesus’ death and resurrection and our Baptism into Him are a greater truth and promise: that death is not the end, and it’s not forever. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Death you cannot end my gladness: I am baptized into Christ! When I die I leave all sadness To inherit paradise! Though I lie in dust and ashes, Faith’s assurance brightly flashes: Baptism has the strength divine to make life immortal mine! (“God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It” LSB 594, st.4)
Today’s Reading: Luke 10:17-20
Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 1:19-36; Matthew 5:21-48

And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”

(Luke 10:18)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. When did Satan fall like lightning from heaven? Was it early on when he first rebelled against God and was cast down? Was it when Jesus died and cried out, “It is finished!”? Was Jesus talking about all the preaching done by the seventy men He sent out? The answer is “yes!”

“Satan” means “accuser.” He’s the guy who tells God you don’t belong with God because you’re a sinner. But Jesus’ death takes away our sins, so now the devil has nothing on you. No accusations. No evidence. But he still tries to slither up to heaven and tell God you can’t be there. So whenever the preaching of the Gospel happens, boom! Satan is cast down like lightning.

When someone is baptized, Satan gets the boot. When a Christian is absolved of her sins, the devil is sent packing. When a pastor proclaims the death and resurrection of Jesus, the evil one runs away with his tail between his legs.

There are angels and then there are angels. We usually think of angels as just heavenly beings we can’t see who do battle with the forces of evil and protect us without our thinking about it. But the word “angel” means “messenger,” so in a very real sense, your pastor is an angel. He’s a messenger. And when your pastor proclaims the goodness of Jesus to you or anyone else, it’s like flipping on the light in a room full of cockroaches: They scatter! So does Satan, running back to the cracks and darkness.

The devil can’t accuse you. Your sins and their guilt have been laid upon Jesus and paid for by Him. When Satan stands before God to tattle on you, the Lord just says, “Get out of here, liar!” And out he goes. He’ll keep trying until the Last Day, but he’ll never succeed, because Jesus ended those accusation with His great “It is finished!” from Calvary. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ! Drop your ugly accusation, I am not so soon enticed. Now that to the font I’ve traveled, All your might has come unraveled, And, against your tyranny, God, my Lord, units with me. (“God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It” LSB 594, st.3)

“For the Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.”

(Deuteronomy 2:7)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The Bible is the story of God’s promise, made to a fallen world: the promise of a Savior. It tells the story of God’s people through whom His only-begotten Son took on flesh in the earthly family of Abraham, Isaac, David, Judah, David, and that whole line of chosen people. The eyewitness testimony of the Gospels and the instruction and teaching of Christ delivered by the apostles means the whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is about Jesus.

St. Jerome was one of the early Church fathers whose great gift to the Church was the translation of the Old and New Testaments into Latin, from the Hebrew and Greek. This version of the Bible is known as the Vulgate, because it was in the “common tongue” of Latin at the time.

Today the Bible is available in just about any language you can think of and if not, translators are working on it! For those who speak and read English, there are many, many translations and versions. While they differ in being more or less literal, every faithful translation will always deliver the Good News of Jesus Christ in the language in which it’s written. This is a heritage and gift of Jerome.

As Moses recorded the works of God among His people in the desert, looking ahead to Christ, so the prophets and apostles wrote and pointed forward or back to Jesus. So there, in the Holy Scriptures, we have the sure and certain record of God’s promises to His people. We have the Good News of the death and resurrection of Jesus for all people of whatever language they know. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, God of truth, Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light on our path. You gave Your servant Jerome delight in his study of Holy Scripture. May those who continue to read, mark, and inwardly digest Your Word find in it the food of salvation and the fountain of life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*
Thursday of the 16th Week after Trinity
OCTOBER 1, 2020

Today’s Reading: Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar
Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 2:16-37; Matthew 6:16-34

Who receives this sacrament worthily? . . . But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require all hearts to believe.
(Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar, pt.5)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. If someone sketchy were to give you a sandwich, you might not want to eat it. “It’s fine,” they say, “I didn’t spit on it or anything.” If you don’t believe them, you won’t eat the sandwich.

If Jesus says that the bread and wine are His Body and Blood, “given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” then faith’s reply is to eat that bread and drink from that cup. In other words, to believe Jesus’ words means we would obviously eat and drink His Gift. If we didn’t believe, why would we bother? If we don’t believe that Jesus died for our sins and rose again, why would we pretend we want a gift we don’t believe in?

We often hear Jesus’ Supper described in a way that makes it sound like His Body and Blood are not really there. It’s just a “representation” some might say, “a symbol.” While that is incorrect, there’s more to unbelief than simply misunderstanding Jesus’ words. Unbelief means to deny who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Worthiness for the Supper does not rely on our understanding of “how” it can be His Body and Blood.” If it did, no one would receive it! Rather, to deny Jesus’ forgiveness is what makes us unworthy to receive His Supper.

You see, Jesus doesn’t want us to worry about it, be confused, or question it. The bread and wine are not His Body and Blood because we believe it. They are the Body and Blood of the crucified and risen Lord and He gives them to you so that you can be sure beyond a shadow of a doubt, that His Gift is for you. The purpose of His Gift is to make sure you know and believe and never doubt that your sins are forgiven. Once again, we see that our “worthiness” isn’t in what we do, but in what Jesus has already done for us. He died and rose and He gives His Supper for you. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Is this for me? I am forgiven and set free! I do believe That I receive His very body and His blood. O taste and see—the Lord is good.
(“What Is This Bread” LSB 629, st.5)
Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. 

(Ephesians 3:13)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Truth is, the suffering of others is often for our benefit! Consider when you were born: It was painful and a struggle for your mother. Through that struggle, the Lord brought you into this world. Consider how your parents may have suffered while raising you: They worried about you and put up with your sins and mistakes. Consider military members or first responders who may be hurt or even killed, not for their own sake, but for the sake of those they serve.

Think about how God’s own Son suffered in order to save us. He gave Himself up to be shamed and scorned and mocked and beaten and crucified and killed. He did that so your sins would be forgiven. He did that so you are saved and have eternal life.

When the Lord sent His preachers out into the world, they suffered many things, often awful things, to bring the Good News of Jesus to people. Paul doesn’t mind. He understands that if he suffers for preaching the Gospel, but people hear and believe it, it will all have been worth it. In other words, his suffering was for the benefit of those who hear the Good News of Jesus.

Your pastor is no different. He struggles with the challenges of trying to faithfully preach and care for Jesus’ flock. He is often saddened to see when things don’t seem to work out. He prays earnestly for the salvation of God’s people. It’s a battle, but one he is willing to suffer through for your sake.

You see, when we suffer for the good of others, we are learning that they are more important than we are. Our suffering will be used by the Lord for their good. That doesn’t always seem fair, but that’s exactly how our Old Adam gets crucified and shut down. The new man in Christ rejoices in whatever things we face. That’s because in Jesus, we are confident of our victory and new life and we are glad whenever the Lord can use us to be good for others. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Help us that we Thy saving Word In faithful hearts may treasure; Let e’er that Bread of Life afford New grace in richest measure. O make us die to ev’ry sin, Each day create new life within, That fruits of faith my flourish.

(“O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace” LSB 693, st.2)
Saturday of the 16th Week after Trinity
OCTOBER 3, 2020

Today’s Reading: Introit for the 17th Sunday after Trinity
(Psalm 119:1-2, 5-6; antiphon: vs. 137, 124)

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 4:1-20; Matthew 7:13-29

Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, And teach me Your statutes.
(From the Introit for the 17th Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Christians desire that the Lord deal with us according to His mercy. That is, we acknowledge our sinfulness and know there is no hope of forgiveness apart from Jesus and what He has done for us. So we pray for the Lord’s mercy in Jesus and we hear the Good News that for Jesus’ sake we are forgiven.

Having heard God’s mercy, as a new creation in Christ, we also desire to learn the Lord’s statutes, His laws, His commandments. We desire to keep and follow them not to impress God, but for the good of our neighbor. We want them to see Christ’s light shining through us and we want our words and actions to be helpful and loving and good for others.

This is why we go to church: to hear of God’s mercy in Jesus, that our sins are forgiven, and to learn to love others as ourselves, and even more than ourselves. Whether it’s the simplified Bible stories of early Sunday School or the deep dive into the Scriptures in Bible Study, whether it’s the simple refrains of Scripture in the liturgy or a deep and meaningful hymn, whether it’s the praise upon our lips or the gifts of Jesus delivered in water, Word, bread and wine—this is how the Holy Spirit teaches us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Show us your mercy, Lord. He does: It’s Jesus! And teach us your statutes: He does as He loves others through your words and works. That’s Christ living in you! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the salutary gift of your Supper, and we implore You that of your mercy you would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, You Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Adapted from the Post-Communion Collect, LSB)
Martin Luther’s Morning and Evening Prayers taken from the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther.

Unless otherwise noted, Biblical quotations are from the NKJV.


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