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

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REFLECTIONS

TRINITY 16 - 20

SEPTEMBER 19 -
OCTOBER 23, 2021

HIGHER
THINGS®

DARE TO BE LUTHERAN®

Trinity 16 - 20
SEPTEMBER 19 - OCTOBER 23, 2021

Notes

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St. James of Jerusalem, Brother of Jesus and Martyr
OCTOBER 23, 2021

Today's Reading: Acts 15:12-22

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 24:10-25:10; Matthew 16:13-28

*After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name."
(Acts: 15:13-14)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. James of Jerusalem, the brother of our Lord: What a turn around this guy did! If you read the Gospels you will come upon the occasional instances when Jesus is milling around His home country and His brothers try to stop by for a chat. Now this is not in order to catch up on times gone past, but it is because they think their older brother, Jesus, has gone crazy. And who can blame them? They grew up with this man who is now claiming to be the Messiah. I wouldn't believe my weirdo brother either.

But at some point after the resurrection, James comes to faith. Paul mentions that Jesus appeared to James just like He did to Paul. And miraculously, James, just like Paul, was converted. Then God used James, this old doubter of His Son, to testify to the truth of His Son in the city of Jerusalem. James is given to be the head of the church in Jerusalem: We might call him a bishop.

His most important point of business is to distinguish between the Gospel unto salvation and those pushing the works of the Law unto salvation. The Circumcision Party had been going around Judea and Galilee and all the known world pushing the works of the Law instead of proclaiming Christ. Their gospel was a gospel of "Make yourself worthy through the works of your hands and then you might be deserving of the things of Jesus."

But James knew this to be rubbish, for how had he ever made himself worthy of Jesus? James had rejected Jesus throughout his whole earthly life and needed a special post-resurrection appearance in order to believe. There was no way that he was going to ever allow those pushing works-righteousness to obscure the Holy Gospel of Christ crucified. And so James hears Paul's testimony and the whole council agrees with him and Barnabas: Salvation is open, free and clear to the Gentiles, just as much as it is to the Jews. It is for James' stand for the Gospel that we give thanks this day. Christ Jesus is for all and there is no work of the Law needed to make oneself worthy. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

May God bestow on us His grace, With blessings rich provide us; And may the brightness of His face To life eternal guide us. That we His saving health may know, His gracious will and pleasure, And also to the nations show Christ's riches without measure And unto God convert them.

("May God Bestow on Us His Grace" LSB 823, st.1)

A Short Form for Daily Reflection
ADAPTED FROM LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

Make the sign of the Holy Cross and say:

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

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

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

Read the Daily Lectionary selections.

Read the Reflection for the Day.

Say the Apostles' Creed.

Pray the Lord's Prayer.

Pray one of these little prayers:

(In the Morning)

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

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

(In the Evening)

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

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

The 16th Sunday after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 19, 2021

Today's Reading: Luke 7:11-17

Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 2:11-20; 4:1-6; 1 Timothy 2:1-15

And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." ... And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." (Luke 7:1

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. People sometimes say silly things at funerals. We don't often have the right words to say when someone dies. Death is too big of an event and our language fails. How can we properly express our sympathy and grief to the bereaved?

I've buried dozens of people during my several years as a pastor, so I've heard people say all sorts of foolish things. I'm still not sure what we should say at funerals, but I know a bit about what we should not say. "Don't cry" is probably the worst thing that you could say. Death is the enemy! How could we not cry and feel sad when someone we love has died? Jesus Himself weeps at the tomb of His friend Lazarus! Sorrow is natural and grief is actually quite healthy, so long as it is not given over to despair. You do not need to deny the tragedy that has occurred when someone dies.

What shall we do with our friend Jesus then? Was He wrong? I do not advise any of you to use His words at a funeral unless you can do what Jesus can do. He comes to the saddest woman in the world, and tells her to stop weeping. This seems ridiculous.

This is how things will go with Jesus. It is nearly unbelievable. Not only does He command the sad mother to not weep, He then speaks to the dead son. "Arise!" Jesus does uncommon and seemingly foolish things all the time because He can follow through on them. The dead young man hears the words of Jesus, sits up, and begins to speak! Jesus tells the mother to stop weeping because He is going to raise her son from death.

Our world will be filled with weeping on account of death until Jesus comes again, touches us, and speaks to us. Be assured that this will indeed happen. Your ears will hear the voice of Jesus, as clearly as you already have in Holy Baptism and in the preaching of the Word, and you will be raised from the dead. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, we pray that Your grace may always go before and follow after us, that we may continually be 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 Trinit

Friday of the 20th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 22, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 21:1-23; Matthew 16:1-12

And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. (Deuteronomy 21:22-23c)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. This seems to be a bit of a throw-away line. It doesn't make much sense in the context of the rest of Deuteronomy 21, other than the fact that it is indeed another law heaped out for the masses to fulfill. There is no real connection between unsolved murders and marrying the women whom you have made captive. And as for the direct tie to inheritance rights and how to treat a rebellious son, your guess is as good as mine.

But if you read the Old Testament in the light of the New, if you have the lens of Jesus to peer through as you trudging your way through Moses and his first five books of the Bible, then throw-away verses like this tend to have a little more meaning to them.

Paul seemed to figure this out. Or better said, the Holy Spirit apparently enlightened Paul in this matter and so he has gone ahead and enlightened us as well. In the third chapter to his letter to the Galatians, Paul is arguing against the works of the Law. For truly everyone is cursed by the demands of the Law. It lays out for us an impossibly difficult task: Just read all of Deuteronomy and tell me if you can pull it off.

But Christ has freed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us. That is what Paul says in Galatians 3:13. But he isn't just making up some new sort of theology. He is harkening back to Moses, to our text in Deuteronomy. Jesus is that dead guy who is hanging on the tree. And yes, He is the One who is cursed by God. Cursed by God because your sin and my sin is upon Him. Cursed by God because Jesus has become sin.

And in this, we have faith and are saved. For faith is of the Gospel, not of the Law. Works are of the Law, but we are saved by the Gospel, by faith in the Gospel, by faith in the Gospel of Jesus, by faith in the Gospel of Jesus hanging on the Cross for you. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Upon the cross extended See, world, your Lord suspended. Your Savior yields His breath. The Prince of Life from heaven Himself has freely given To shame and blows and bitter death.

Your soul in griefs unbounded, Your head with thorns surrounded, You died to ransom me. The cross for me enduring, The crown for me securing, You healed my wounds and set me free. ("Upon the Cross Extended" LSB 453, st.1, 5)

Thursday of the 20th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 21, 2021

Today's Reading: Ephesians 5:15-21

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 20:1-20; Matthew 15:21-39

Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:19-21)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Paul lays out how it is we are to serve our neighbor, how we are to love them as ourselves. There are a lot of specifics at the end of Ephesians. Paul doesn't shy away from how the Christian, the New Man in Christ, is to act. As has been said many times before, the Law shows you what love looks like. You don't have to guess. You don't have to wonder how you are to love your neighbor. The Law will tell you.

And one of the most foundational ways that we are to love our neighbor is by submitting or subjecting ourselves to them. Now, we don't like that word because it comes with the connotation of "less than vs. greater than," but that is not our Lord's intention.

We submit to each other as the situation calls for it. God is the God of order and that means we all hold different vocations. That is good. That is exactly how it should be. Within a family there is a father and a mother, children and grandparents, aunts and uncles, and each member of the family fits under or over someone else. The same thing is true for your place of work or school, your sports teams or social clubs, or society in general. We are all given different vocations and we fulfill them accordingly.

The one in subjection recognizes the authority that God has given to the one who is over him. And so we do not fight against that or despise it. We thank the Lord that He has created for us a life of order and not one of chaos.

The one in authority also recognizes something; he has been given that authority, not so that he can be served, but so that he can serve those under him. The one with authority takes his cue from the One with all authority, Christ Jesus. He came as a servant to all, even being willing to lay down his life. So, too, do we serve our neighbor selflessly and lovingly.

All of this is a good gift from above. And we always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for He gives for our good and we receive His gifts with joy. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Penitent sinners, for mercy crying, Pardon and peace from Him obtain; Ever the wants of the poor supplying, Their faithful God He will remain. He helps His children in distress, The widows and the fatherless. Alleluia, alleluia!
(*"Praise the Almighty" LSB 797, st. 4*)

Monday of the 16th Week after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

Today's Reading: 1 Kings 17:17-24

Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 4:7-23; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

Then [Elijah] stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again." (1 Kings 17:21)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Lord's business is resurrection. A prayer to the Lord for a resurrection is sure to be heard, for this is what He has shown that He is about. Elijah doesn't try to comfort the mother with empty words. There's no "He's in a better place" or "At least you had him for these years." She is angry, and rightly so. Death can indeed cause us to be angry. It just isn't right. You were not created to die. Mothers should not have to bury their children. No one should have to bury anyone. You were created to live.

And so, the Lord's business is resurrection. We brought death upon ourselves, and the Lord has seen fit to reverse our foolish and tragic actions. Our addiction to sin has earned death for all of us. Each and every single last one of us will die because we are all sinners. Sometimes the Lord gives us a taste of the world to come a little bit early. Elijah knew that the Lord would raise the dead, and so he stretched himself upon the child three times while crying out to the Lord.

This seems bizarre, but it is not so different from what has happened to you. The Lord has touched you in Holy Baptism, stretching Himself over you, marking you as one ready to receive resurrection when the time comes. The Lord touches you in Holy Absolution, again marking you as a pre-resurrected saint. Sometimes your pastor may even lay his stole over your head when Absolution is given. The Lord comes to you, and gives His Body and Blood to you in the Holy Eucharist.

This may all look as strange as if old Elijah had stretched himself over us. And yet, touch is how the Lord has come to us. He has touched you, and set you aside to receive your life again. It has been given back to you already, and one day, you will sit up from a grave, and be given back to your Mother, the Church. That's the Lord's business. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

Today's Reading: Matthew 9:9-13

Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 5:1-16; 6:1-9, 15-16; 1 Timothy 4:1-16

"Follow me."

(Matthew 9:

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. "Follow me." Two words. That's all Jesus said to Matthew. There's no complicated plan. There aren't twelve steps or even six chief parts. I've seen some schemes for salvation that seem very difficult to even interpret, what with all of the steps, stairs, and degrees. I'm fascinated by the fact that Jesus just says these two words. He doesn't explain much.

The same sort of thing happened with the other disciples, too. Jesus just called them. He did tell Peter that he will be fishing for men, but even that did not reveal very much. I don't think they knew what they were getting into when Jesus called them. He just called them, and they followed.

Did you know what you were getting into when Jesus called you to follow Him? Who could have known, when the water was splashed upon you and the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit placed upon your head, where this would all lead? Following Jesus might lead to persecution, trials, tribulations, and all sorts of seemingly nasty things. Following Jesus also might lead to an incredibly satisfying life lived with faithful people and family surrounding you. Or both. You really can't know. All you can know for sure is that if you follow Jesus, you will go where He has gone, and He will not leave you behind.

Ultimately this means that you will follow Jesus into death and resurrection, for this is where He has already gone. You cannot be defeated. You have been called to live.

Matthew got up from his tax collection booth and began to live, following Jesus. You have been called to truly live and follow Jesus, too. Who knows where it will take you? Matthew could not have known then what we know now; that he would follow Jesus, compose the first account of the life of Christ, and that millions of people would come to salvation through these words. Wherever your life in Christ takes you, it is all lived in Christ, so it will be good. Let the adventure begin! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Son of God, our blessed Savior Jesus Christ, You called Matthew the tax collector to be an apostle and evangelist. Through his faithful and inspired witness, grant that we may also follow You, leaving behind all covetous desires and love of riches; for You live and reign with the Father and the Son, one God now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday of the 20th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 20, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Sacrament of the Altar, part 4

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

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)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. This is no parlor trick. Nor is it a simple meal of remembrance, as we would think about the word "remembrance." For when God remembers His salvation, it is not just that He thinks back in time to the day of the Red Sea crossing or deliverance from Babylon or Good Friday. He is outside of time, so to Him such an idea of "remembering" doesn't even exist. When God remembers, or when He calls us to remember, it is an incorporation into the actual event of salvation.

In the same way that the people were incorporated in the daily sacrifices of the temple (receiving the slaughtered animal's flesh, taking it home, cooking it, and eating it) so, too, are we incorporated into the sacrifice of the Cross. We don't just remember with our mind, but we remember with our mouths. We take and eat the Body of our Lord. We take and drink His Blood poured out for us.

This is the way of our Lord. He gives with real blessing, real life, real Jesus, real forgiveness in and with real things. There is no remembering the Cross at communion that doesn't also include receiving the Cross. And therefore there is no remembering Jesus and His sacrifice in the Sacrament without receiving Jesus, His sacrifice, and all that He won on the Cross.

And so, in receiving the Sacrament you receive the forgiveness of sins. With the forgiveness of sins you receive life and salvation as well, because with all sins forgiven, eternal life and eternal salvation are yours forever.

How is this all possible? Christ your Lord said it is. And His Word is not just descriptive, it is prescriptive, it is creative. His Word gives exactly what His Word says. And so yes, when you participate in the Sacrament you receive the forgiveness of sins, and you receive Jesus, because He said so. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, we praise Thee, bless Thee and adore Thee, In thanksgiving bow before Thee. Thou with Thy body and Thy blood didst nourish Our weak souls that they may flourish: O Lord, have mercy! May Thy body, Lord, born of Mary, That our sins and sorrows did carry, And Thy blood for us plead In all trial, fear, and need: O Lord, have mercy! ("O Lord, We Praise Thee" LSB)

Tuesday of the 20th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 19, 2021

Today's Reading: Isaiah 55:1-9

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 18:1-22; Matthew 14:22-36

"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food." (Isaiah 5

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The ways of the Lord are not our ways. His thoughts are not like ours. They are far above us: As the heavens are high from the earth, so, too, are God's thoughts and ways far above ours. And this is a good thing. Often we think about this lofty fact in the light of God's being so much bigger, so much smarter than us. We think of it in regard to His omniscience, the fact that He knows all things and can see the game play out, whereas we are stuck in the game and can't see more than two moves in front of us. While this is all true, of course, I don't think this is what Isaiah means.

Isaiah tells us to come and buy wine and milk, come and purchase them both so that we can be content. And so we come, with money in hand; money that looks like our works, money that looks like our self-assured pride, money that looks like our lineage or our ancestry or anything else that pertains to the Law. We come prepared to purchase that which we need, for this is the way of our lowly thoughts.

But what we buy looks nothing like wine, nor does it taste anything like milk. We don't seem to mind, for we are quite assured that what we have purchased for ourselves is--we think--far, far better than what God has in store for us.

But our Lord's ways are so much different, so much higher. He tells us to buy, but without money, which means, of course, that we aren't buying anything. Instead, it is all a gift given. For when I don't bring anything to the table, but get the most exquisite meal anyway, that means the Lord is going about His higher work once again. Gifts for everyone! Free and clear! Bellies all full, sins all forgiven, death all dead.

Come, buy the things of your Lord! You won't believe how great the deal is. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus, Thy boundless love to me No thought can reach, no tongue declare; Unite my thankful heart to Thee, And reign without a rival there! Thine wholly, Thine alone I am; Be Thou alone my constant flame.

("Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me" LSB 683, st.1

Wednesday of the 16th Week after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Office of the Keys

Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 7:1-4; 8:1-18; 1 Timothy 5:1-16

Confession has two parts.

Small Catechism: Office of the Keys)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The entirety of the Christian life, and life in general, is summed up in this little phrase: Confession has two parts. That's it! I bring my sins to Jesus and Jesus forgives me. I contribute nothing to my salvation except my sins, which are forgiven in the Name of Jesus. I bring death and Jesus brings life. We often make the mistake of thinking that our life should be lived perfectly, when really it is meant to be lived in forgiveness. I am not perfect, but Jesus Christ is, and His perfection is given to me.

The Church practiced confession in a very different way prior to the Reformation. There used to be three parts to confession: contrition, confession, and penance. It was believed that you had to feel really bad about your sins, and then do something in order to earn the Absolution. Most often you would just have to say a bunch of prayers or go to church. It is even taught in some places today that you can earn Absolution simply by walking through a particular door at a particular time. We humans are very good at inventing ways to get rid of our sins, but these methods look past and away from Jesus.

If my forgiveness depends on my level of feeling bad about my sins or how many prayers I can say in order to earn Absolution, I'll never feel bad enough or say enough prayers. My sins are much worse than I think they are, and the mercy of Christ is much more than I will ever truly know it to be.

Make no mistake, your sins are taken away from you by Jesus. He forgives you all your sins. This is why you have a pastor. Jesus Christ wants you, personally, to know and to receive the gifts that were won on the Cross. And so He has sent you a pastor to speak for Him. When you hear your pastor pronounce forgiveness, it is as if Jesus Christ is speaking to you. Pastors aren't God, they just speak for Him. What Jesus says goes, and He says that you are forgiven. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Though great our sins, yet greater still is God's abundant favor; His hand of mercy never will abandon us, nor waver. Our shepherd good and true is He, Who will at last His Israel free from all their sin and sorrow.

("From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee" LSB 607, st.5

Thursday of the 16th Week after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 23, 2021

Today's Reading: Ephesians 3:13-21

Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 9:1-21; 1 Timothy 5:17-6:2

[Give] thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(Ephesians 3:2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Well, that's a pretty big request, isn't it? We're really supposed to give thanks always and for everything? There's nothing that we shouldn't be giving thanks for? This is hard to believe, and perhaps even harder to practice. Think about all the awful things in the world! Are we really supposed to give thanks for suffering and hardship? It is easy to give thanks for money and nice stuff. But what about the difficult things?

St. Polycarp, as he was being burned at the stake in the year 155, blessed the Lord and thanked Him that he was found worthy to share in the cup of Christ. He did not pray for immediate deliverance from his afflictions, but gave thanks that the Lord had already provided the escape. Quite simply, nothing can harm you if you are in Christ, not even persecution. You can give thanks for everything all the time in the Name of Jesus Christ.

The key here is to give thanks in the Name of Jesus. Apart from Jesus, life is meaningless and full of suffering. Without Jesus, your life ends in death and that is that. But your life is lived in the Name of Jesus Christ. This Name was placed upon you in Holy Baptism, and Jesus goes where His Name is placed. Think about the life of Christ. His family rejected Him. He was stricken, smitten, and afflicted. He was betrayed by His friend and abandoned by His disciples. He was put to death in His early 30s in the worst way possible. If that were all, it would have been a meaningless waste.

But Jesus did not stay on a Cross or in a grave. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father! So yes, you can give thanks for everything all the time, no matter what. Try it. You cannot die and you cannot be harmed. The Cross of Jesus has been given to you, and with His Cross comes resurrection. This is a difficult teaching, but so is the Cross. Yet, this is all we've been given. Give thanks. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, by the patient endurance of Your only-begotten Son You beat down the pride of the old enemy. Help us to treasure rightly in our hearts what our Lord has borne for our sakes that, after His example, we may bear with patience those things that are adverse to us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

St. Luke, Evangelist

OCTOBER 18, 2021

Today's Reading: Luke 10:1-9

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 17:1-20; Matthew 14:1-21

And [Jesus] said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."
(Luke 10:2-3)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Jesus sends out the 72. It's kind of like a dry-run for Pentecost. The disciples are to go out and preach the message of peace to all they come upon. Peace for the sinner. Peace for the unrighteous. Peace for the enemy, the filthy, the unclean, the unworthy. Jesus sends His disciples out to do a job of peace-proclamation, for God's enemy needs to hear this peace, which means I do, too.

Jesus sends out the 72 to every village and city that He is about to go into. Kind of like John the Baptist preparing the road, making the path straight. But this, too, should show us something: Jesus always follows the proclamation of the Gospel. If the peace of the Lord is proclaimed to the people, that means that Jesus is there. For it is Jesus who is the Author of our peace.

And here, too, we should make sure we understand the severity of this peace. For the peace from our Lord is not some hippy-dippy peace found in flowers and puppy dogs. It isn't some fake peace of unity, which is not a real unity because the two sides are still in opposition to each other. No, the peace of our Lord is a true and lasting peace that quells the war between God and sinners.

Today, right here and right now, you have that peace. It is a peace proclaimed into your ears by simple little men who look so similar to the 72 in our text for today. These men are your pastors and they have been sent to proclaim peace to you. And peace sounds like forgiveness. Peace sounds like the Cross. Peace sounds like an empty tomb. Peace sounds like sin atoned for and death vanquished and the serpent's head crushed. Peace sounds like Jesus. And so, wouldn't you know it? Wherever God sends His pastors to proclaim His peace, Jesus is soon to follow. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Then raise to Christ a mighty song, And shout His name, His mercies tell! Sing, heav'nly host, your praise prolong, And all on earth, your anthems swell! All hail, O Lamb for sinners slain! Forever let the song ascend! Worthy the Lamb, enthroned to reign, All glory, pow'r! Amen, amen.

("O God of God, O Light of Light" LSB 810, st.4)

The 20th Sunday after Trinity

OCTOBER 17, 2021

Today's Reading: Matthew 22:1-14

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 15:19-16:22; Matthew 13:44-58

"Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find." And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless.

(Matthew 22:9-

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. What makes you worthy to attend the wedding feast? You'd better not think it has something to do with you. If you think that you've earned a place at the wedding feast then you will also think that the wedding feast is optional. Then it is no longer a gift; it is no longer a feast to enjoy, but a tedious chore that you can do without.

But that is not what the feast is, and that is certainly not who the feast is for. Take a look at the guests who are in attendance. They were found among the main roads and out in the streets. They weren't looking for a feast to attend, but were probably expecting to go home and open up a can of Spaghettios. But there they are, both good and bad. Not a single one worthy, but all of them there.

And a garment is given to the guests. Probably a soaking wet one, a white one, a Jesusy one, a baptismal one. This is what is given to the guests and this is what is given to you. What makes them worthy, what makes you worthy, is Christ. The wedding feast is free. It is a party open for all. The invitation is to come and eat to your heart's delight the good and rich food of the King which has been prepared for you.

There is no good reason for unbelief, no good reason to not be at the wedding feast clothed in Christ. If you think there is, when confronted by the King, you will realize that all of your excuses are pointless and you will have nothing to say. But know for certain that this feast is for you. Know for certain that Jesus is for you. Know for certain that He is the One who makes you worthy. Know all of this for certain, and come and enjoy the wedding feast! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, grant to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; 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 20th Sunday after Trinity

Friday of the 16th Week after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 24, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Nehemiah 9:22-38; 1 Timothy 6:3-21

They ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness. Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you. (Nehemiah 9:25-26

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Nehemiah is a record of the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Israelites' exile to Babylon. They rebuild the city and her walls, but also restore faithful worship. As part of this worship and restoration, they confess their sins against the Lord. This chapter of Nehemiah is a very good confession.

They recount all the mighty works of the Lord, which were then met with disobedience and rebellion. This is how you should confess your sins, too. Remember what the Lord has done for you, and how you rebelled against Him. He has given you all that you need, and yet you have gone looking for satisfaction elsewhere. There's no room for half confessions of things that aren't really sinful. The Lord wants to hear your honest confession. You are a sinner. The Lord forgives sins. You can be honest and open about your confession, as much as the returned exiles in Jerusalem were.

The Lord is not out to ruin your fun with His Law. The Ten Commandments are actually good for your life, and if you followed them, you'd be happy. Our problem is that we think we've got something better. Did you ever notice that there are even two commandments against coveting? That means that the Lord really wants you to be happy with what He's given you!

And yet, we rebel. We walk away from Him every day. We turn away from Him. We are Israelites ready for exile. That is good news, for the Lord never abandons His people. He will not abandon you. Turn back to Him. Repent and be restored. His Law is good. He is good. There really is nothing better out there than what He has given you.

Your life will be better if you keep His rules. And when you do not keep them, He is always waiting to forgive you, for He never stops loving you. Give it a try. Make a good confession to the Lord who loves you and has given everything for you. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

To those who help in Christ have found and would in works of love abound it shows what deeds are His delight and should be done as good and right. ("The Law of God Is Good and Wise" LSB 579, st. 3)

Saturday of the 16th Week after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

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

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

Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love and teach me your statutes. (From the Introit for the 17th Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Lord deals with you according to His steadfast love. This is love that does not fade or falter. This love does not depend on your condition or how you are feeling. The truth is that we might feel good about the Lord one day, and doubtful the next. Our plea then, is that He would deal with us according to His steadfast love, because ours just won't do the trick.

Martin Luther, in his 1518 Heidelberg Disputation, wrote that "the love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it." The love that humans have for one another is usually based on some sort of quality that the other person has, and these can wax and wane over our lifetimes, causing our love for one another to increase or decrease. People sometimes fall out of love due to a change in another person.

Are you fearful that the Lord might stop loving you if you can't keep up with His demands? The Lord's steadfast love does hold onto you because you have done enough good, but because you are enough in Christ Jesus. He did not find you and measure whether or not you fit the bill. He found you and loves you just as you are. He has created you, and He loves that which He creates. Isn't it great to be a creature?

Paul speaks of this in Titus 3:5, that "He saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." This is how the Lord has chosen to deal with you! He has come to you and loved you, and will not stop. There was nothing particularly loveable about you, other than you are you. You are His creation. Still not sure? He's baptized you, too, just in case you were wondering if His love might be for everyone else rather than for you. This love is most certainly for you, and is how He has chosen to deal with you. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord, Your mercy will not leave me; ever will Your truth abide. Then in You I will confide. Since Your Word cannot deceive me, my salvation is to me safe and sure eternally.

("Oh, How Great Is Your Compassion" LSB 559, s

Saturday of the 19th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 16, 2021

Today's Reading: Introit for the 20th Sunday after Trinity
(Psalm 48:1, 9-11; antiphon: Liturgical Text)

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 14:1-2, 22-23, 28-15:15; Matthew 13:24-43

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, his holy mountain. We have thought on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. (From the Introit for the 20th Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Let us pray: Lord God, Heavenly Father, You alone are worthy of our praise. You have made Your goodness known to Your Church, Your salvation is proclaimed among us, and we are to be seen as Your great and mighty city. Upon Your mountain the joy of all the earth is to be found. This mountain is known as Calvary and upon it can be found the Cross of Your Son. Upon this Cross You have established Your Church. And because of this Cross You have given to us a fortress that cannot be shaken.

All the kings of the earth can rise against You. They can assemble their troops and ready their forces, but nothing can defeat Your Cross, and so nothing can defeat Your Church. Not even the gates of hell will prevail against Her. Your promise is that all Your enemies have been defeated in Christ. They may shout and shake their fists, but they will not be victorious. Soon they will all flee in terror, shriek at the coming of the Holy One who has defeated them. Within the confines of your Church may we dwell in safety, knowing that our enemies have no power over us.

May Your steadfast love for Your people abound in Christ. Let us rejoice in Your salvation that You have won for us, that You give to us daily in the Gifts given here within the walls of Your Church. And may this Word of salvation reach out to the ends of the earth. May the Word of the Cross be spoken into the ears of our enemies. May those who are at enmity with You be brought to repentance and know that Jesus is for them.

May this be the Church's prayer and may this be our cry of joy: That salvation is ours, but not ours alone. It is for all. You seek not the death of the sinner, but that all would come to the knowledge of the Truth. Let us live our lives within the safety of Your Church. May we know that She will not fall, that She will last forever and ever, that our children and our children's children will receive the same Christ as we receive! Guide us in the ways of your Son, O Lord, that our confidence may never be shaken. Amen. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O, then, draw away your hearts From all pleasures base and hollow; Strive to share what He imparts While you hear His footsteps follow. As you now still wait to rise, Fix your hearts beyond the skies!

("Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense" LSB 741,

Friday of the 19th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 15, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 13:1-18; Matthew 13:1-23

"This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ... But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." (Matthew 13:13, 16)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The parable of the sower is often one of our favorites. We love to hear about the reckless sowing of the seed and how the sower scatters indiscriminately to the wind, letting the seed fall where it may. On the path, the rocks, the thorns, the good soil, the seed goes everywhere. What a wonderful example of how our Lord preaches His Word: He preaches it to all, no matter what.

But perhaps the sinner in us loves this parable so much because we love to be able to look around and figure out what type of soil everyone else is. We, of course, are the good soil. Just look at us and our life. Isn't that obvious? But certainly not Matty, He must be the path where the birds have scavenged up all the seed. He's never stepped foot inside a church. And Sara, she has to be the soil with all of the rocks. She has no root. Her faith falters all the time, even at the smallest bit of suffering. And Tim? His is a thorny soil, for he would rather engage in the things of the world instead of the things of God. They are all the poor soil. But me? Well, just look at me. . .

But look at me! I don't have the faith that I always claim to have. I like my sin and I'm scared of trials and tribulations and sometimes the devil snatches away God's Gospels words of promise before I can even hear them. So where is my comfort amidst all of this? How can I be sure that I am the good soil when it is so obvious that I am the bad?

Perhaps my comfort shouldn't come from deciphering which type of soil I am. Maybe, instead, the comfort should come from the fact that the Sower sows His seed to me no matter my soil. Maybe my assurance is in Him and in His Word. Maybe, just maybe, His Word will accomplish the purpose for which He sent it and He will make me to be the good soil for no other reason than for the sake of Himself. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Preach you the Word and plant it home To men who like or like it not, The Word that shall endure and stand When flow'rs and men shall be forgot.

The sower sows; his reckless love Scatters abroad the goodly seed, Intent alone that all may have The wholesome loaves that all men need.

("Preach You the Word" LSB 586, st.1, 3)

The 17th Sunday after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

Today's Reading: Luke 14:1-11

Daily Lectionary: Malachi 2:1-3:5; Matthew 4:1-11

"Friend, move up higher."

(Luke 14:10)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Sometimes Jesus teaches us things that don't seem to have any immediate practical application. For instance, just a few verses before this parable of the wedding feast, He teaches that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed which grows and gives a place for birds to rest. This is nice, but sometimes, He gives practical advice about how to live your life. I can tell you that this parable is applicable because this exact thing has happened to me.

A friend had given a banquet and I sat at the head of the table. I began to eat, and within minutes, was asked to move. It was very embarrassing. I began, with shame, to take my place at a seat of lower status. If I'd just seated myself at any other place, I wouldn't have had this shameful experience. Don't sit at the highest place. Just don't. It wasn't fun.

It isn't only about where you sit at a banquet, though. It's also about how you live your life in general. Don't go around thinking that you are the best of the best and deserve more than other people, and certainly don't act like you're worth more than others. The truth is that we are all sinners, and I'm the worst of them. Start there, and you can only be asked to move higher.

Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who are humbled will be exalted. This is a major theme of Luke's Gospel. The rich go away empty-handed and the poor have everything given to them. In Christ, the hungry are filled with good things. His ultimate humiliation on the Cross results in the most glorious exaltation of His resurrection.

You don't need to think that you are better than anyone else. That won't get you anywhere, and it also isn't true. But you also need to know that the Lord reaches down to those who are in the low places to lift them up. He has reached His hand down to you, and speaks to you as if He is already a friend. In your Baptism, you've been lifted up as His friend. Friend, move up higher. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me a spirit of despondency, sloth, love of money, and idle talk. But give to me, your servant, a spirit of sober-mindedness, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not to judge my brother, since you are blessed to the ages. Amen.

(Collect for the 17th Sunday after Trinity)

Monday of the 17th Week after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

Today's Reading: Proverbs 25:6-14

Daily Lectionary: Malachi 3:6-4:6; Matthew 4:12-25

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. (Proverbs 25:11)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. A word fitly spoken, depending on the price of gold and the size of your apple, is worth somewhere around \$10,000. The average person uses about 7,000 words in a day. If these were all fitly spoken, you'd be raking in \$70,000,000 a day. What makes such words so valuable?

Fitly spoken words are so valuable because, like gold, they are rare. Unfortunately, I let my words run to and fro without much concern about whom they reach or what they do. "Sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me" just isn't true. Words can hurt, and even kill. Hurtful, slanderous, and murderous words are everywhere. Certainly they have come to you as well. You've also unleashed your own unfitly spoken words, too.

Yet, the good words do come. Words of blessing and benediction flow from the mouth of the Lord, given through the Church, and your pastor. These words are worth more than their weight. They are worth everything. Hold onto them. Remember them. Speak them. These words are given to you in abundance, but sometimes are silenced and drowned by the carelessly spoken words which surround you. These valuable words will give you life. Remember, the Lord spoke creation into existence by a Word, and by a Word, He gives you life.

The Lord's words do what they say. When the Lord says that you are forgiven, this means that you are forgiven. When the Lord places His Name upon you in Holy Baptism, this means that you are His. When the Lord says "This is my Body which is given for you," that means that He really is given, all for you.

Talk is cheap and our words seem to carry little value. It is the Lord's words that are so valuable, which is why the Lord's words spoken through the Church are treasured above all things. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen

Lord, Who has spoken creation into existence, Who speaks to us even today; guard our tongues against slanderous and hurtful words. Speak into us a love for Your words, which are more precious than silver and gold. Give us ears to receive Your glorious life giving words, which alone are spoken fitly. In the Name of Jesus Christ, Your incarnate Word, Amen.

Thursday of the 19th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 14, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 12:13-32; Matthew 12:38-50

*But [Jesus] answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
(Matthew 12:39-40)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. What is the will of the Father? That He would break and hinder every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh that does not want His Word to be taught in truth and purity and does not want that Word to be believed in faith.

The sinner wants to see signs and wonders. The sinner tells God that he will believe in Him as long as God shows him a sign. But the signs that we want are always the wrong type of sign. We want to dictate to God the ways in which He should do things, the ways in which He should work and save and forgive. In telling God how He should be God, we are really just making ourselves god. It is the fruit in the Garden all over again. Sinners never come up with anything new; we always revert back to the original sin of wanting to be like God.

But God has already done it all for us in Christ Jesus, through a bloody Cross and an empty tomb. Believe in that, believe in Him, believe that God has already done the work of salvation and He gives that salvation to you in His Word and through His Sacraments. A Jesus risen from the dead is all that you need. The problem is that the sinner who is confident in his own ways won't even believe in the words of a once-dead Jesus, come back from the grave.

And so the sinner needs Jesus. He needs Jesus for it all: for life, for forgiveness, even for faith. For the sinner on his own can't believe in the things of an empty tomb and all that that means. So we pray that His Word is taught among us in truth and purity: free Gospel given to us without any merit or worthiness on our part. And we pray that His Spirit would bring us to, and keep us in, the faith as we hear this Word taught among us, so that we might hear Christ say to us, "You are My brother and sister." In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Christ Jesus, God's own Son, came down, His people to deliver; Destroying sin, He took the crown From death's pale brow forever: Stripped of pow'r, no more it reigns; An empty form alone remains; Its sting is lost forever. Alleluia!
("Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands" LSB 458, st.3)*

Wednesday of the 19th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 13, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Sacrament of the Altar, part 3

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 11:26-12:12; Matthew 12:22-37

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking? These words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," shows 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. 3)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Why do we eat and drink the Supper of our Lord? Well, first, because Christ has commanded it. But this command is not to be seen as law to be heaped upon us and to burden our conscience. It is a command of love from our gracious Savior who gives what He has promised to give, in the very way that He has promised to give it.

On the Cross was where all sins found their end. Christ took them into His body and crucified them to that tree. His blood poured out upon all sins to cover them in a sacrifice that atones for them and washes them away. And so, the victory has been won on the Cross. It is finished! But the victory is not given to us at the Cross.

We are temporal creatures who live in a temporal world with the things of time and space. Because 2000 years separate you from that Good Friday, you can't go back to the Cross to receive what Christ has won for you there. But Christ doesn't ask you to go back to the Cross. He doesn't ask you to go to Him. Instead, He comes to you. He places on your tongue the gifts of the Cross: His Body broken there for you, given to you here in time and space. And He pours down your throat the gifts of the Cross: His Blood poured out for you there, given to you here in time and space.

How can you be sure that you have the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation? Because Jesus is in you. And not just, "in you" in some sort of mystical way, but in a real and tangible way, a touchy and feely way, a tasty and certain way. Take eat, His Body given for you! Take and drink, His Blood poured out for you! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Thy holy body into death was given, Life to win for us in heaven. No greater love than this to Thee could bind us; May this feast thereof remind us! O Lord, have mercy! Lord, Thy kindness did so constrain Thee That Thy blood should bless and sustain me. All our debt Thou has paid; Peace with God once more is made: O Lord, have mercy!
(*"O Lord, We Praise Thee" LSB 617, st. 2*)

Tuesday of the 17th Week after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

Today's Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 1:1-18; Matthew 5:1-20

Bearing with one another in love...

(Ephesians 4:2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. You are not alone. We are all in this together. These are not empty platitudes or meaningless slogans. This is the truth. We confess together that we believe in one holy, Christian/catholic, and apostolic Church. There are not many churches, but one, because there is one Lord, one faith, and one Baptism. This is the way it has always been and always will be.

People sometimes mistakenly say that they were baptized Lutheran or Methodist. There is no unique Lutheran Baptism, because there is only one Baptism into Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church. This is why you do not need to be rebaptized if you move to a different town and join another congregation. Not only don't you have to be rebaptized, but you will find a family waiting for you. You will find a congregation of people who bear with one another in love. You will find people who will bear your burdens and love you.

You can find a similar sort of unity in many places. Sometimes people pursue this unity and fellowship in sports or other activities. For instance, we find affinity with people who are fans of the same sports teams, or even just the same sport. Rugby fans have a natural fellowship based on a game that has been around since 1823. But when was the last time you found people who loved one another because of their love of fox tossing, chariot racing, or club swinging? Those sports have all vanished, but used to be very popular. We have something better and more permanent in Christ.

The Church has been in existence since the beginning of time. By finding your unity within the Church of Christ, you are being established for eternity. Sports are good, but there will be a day when hockey and football are as popular as jousting is today. In fact, the unity which we pursue in other things is a product of the way that the Lord has designed us to love one another. Yet, it is a pale reflection of the unity we find in the Church.

The Church is forever because Christ is forever. We bear with one another in this Church, through good and bad, wins and losses, ups and downs, and whatever life will throw at us. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth; her charter of salvation; one Lord, one faith, one birth. One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food, and to one hope she presses with every grace endued.

(*"The Church's One Foundation" LSB 644, st. 2*)

St. Michael and All Angels

SEPTEMBER 29, 2021

Today's Reading: Luke 10:17-20

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 1:19-36; Matthew 5:21-48

"Nothing shall hurt you."

(Luke 10:19)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Jesus had earlier sent 72 disciples to go out and prepare His way. They were to go with very few supplies, announce the peace of God, and rely on the generosity of strangers for their wellbeing. This sort of thing seems impossible before it happens, but is amazing when it does.

The 72 returned, extremely excited and amazed by what had happened to them. Not only were their physical needs taken care of, but demons were also cast out in the Name of Jesus. They'd seen more than they thought was even possible. Perhaps the angels fought on their side?

Jesus, of course, knew what the 72 would find on their missionary journey. He'd authorized them to stomp serpents and scorpions, and even the power of the enemy, and nothing would hurt them! Nothing! They were given authority over the devil, the world, and their own sinful flesh. And yet, Jesus tells them that this is not all about flashy exorcisms and healings. There's more to the Christian life than the immediately apparent miracles. The more important thing was for them to rejoice that their names are written in heaven.

We live in a time where it seems that the snakes, scorpions, and the power of the devil are on the rise. Do we still have authority over these things? Most certainly, yes, we do. Demons have been cast from your life through the Word of the Lord. As you are splashed in Holy Baptism, the serpents and scorpions have quickly scattered from your path.

And even more than this, your names have been written in heaven. Rejoice! The Revelation talks about the Book of Life which is held in heaven. Those whose names are written in this book are brought into the eternal city of God. Have you ever tried to board an airplane when your name is not on the list? You can't do it. The same goes for these names written in heaven. Because your name is there, you belong there. Whatever amazing miracles you witness throughout your life, rejoice first that your name is written in heaven. You belong with Christ Jesus, and ultimately nothing will hurt you, not even death. Rejoice! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Everlasting God, You have ordained and constituted the service of angels and men in a wonderful order. Mercifully grant that, as Your holy angels always serve and worship You in heaven, so by Your appointment they may also help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Collect for St. Michael and All Angels)

Tuesday of the 19th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 12, 2021

Today's Reading: Ephesians 4:22-28

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 11:1-25; Matthew 12:1-21

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. You have a new life in Christ. That is the gift of your Baptism. Christ's Cross has been brought to you. His victory over sin, death and the grave has been splashed down upon you in the wet Word of the font. You have been buried into His death and raised to new life in His resurrection. This is who you are. It is done. You are a righteous, holy, justified, saint in Christ.

And as such, sin has no place in your life. How could it? The ways of the Old Man are now dead to you. Christ has killed them. Nailed them through His hands and feet and buried them in the cold dead ground. Put away those old ways. Speak the truth, for that is who you are. Love your neighbor even as Christ has loved you, even when your neighbor has made himself to be your enemy. Absolve those who have sinned against you. Do it now! Do it today! Do not let the devil have any opportunity to breed hate and vengeance within you.

But the Old Man is still alive within you. He wakes up each and every morning with the rising of the sun. That is why it is good to begin each day with the sign of the Cross and to remember your Baptism. For the Old Man still rages and must be put to death daily, hourly, minute by minute.

It is a battle to be sure, but it is a battle that has already been won. That is the key to it all: The victory is yours! You have been baptized. You are of Christ. Of that, there is no doubt! His death on the Cross, His empty tomb, His ascension into heaven with all things placed under His feet, all of that has been given to you. You are washed and wetted and spoken clean in Christ. You are a New Man in Christ!

And so when you fail in the things of the New Man, fear not. Return to your Baptism. Drown the Old Man once again. Receive the forgiveness of your sins. And live your forgiven life in Christ! In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"You shall not murder, hurt, nor hate; Your anger dare not dominate. Be kind and patient; help, defend, And treat your foe as your friend." Have mercy, Lord!

"You shall not steal or take away What others worked for night and day, But open wide a gen'rous hand And help the poor in the land." Have mercy, Lord!

("These Are the Holy Ten Commands" LSB 581, st. 6, 8)

Monday of the 19th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 11, 2021

Today's Reading: Genesis 28:10-17

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 9:23-10:22; Matthew 11:20-30

"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."
(Genesis 28:15)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Jacob is on the run. He is in fear for his life. He had tricked his father into giving him a blessing that shouldn't have been his. He had stolen from his brother (not once, but twice) something that belonged to him. He had made a mess of his life all because he found it impossible to stand in the promises of the Lord.

The Old Testament is filled with scoundrels. The fathers of the Church are not the great and pious men that we sometimes think them to be. They all have their times of doubt. They all have their times of deep and egregious sin. None of them have fulfilled the Law placed before them. But they are all counted as righteous: not for the sake of themselves, but for the sake of Christ.

The sinner in us hears the promises of our God and then goes about trying to make them our own. How foolish! We can't make these things our own. God is the One who has promised these things to us and so He is the One who is going to bring them to fruition. But the sinner always wants to give God a helping hand. The problem, of course, is that our "helping hand" always makes everything worse.

We are all like Jacob in that way: God has given us the promise of life and salvation but we go and screw everything up. However, the Christian must not fear, even when he has turned his life into a giant mess. For we have a God who is faithful, even and especially when we are faithless. And so He still has the authority to bring about good, our ultimate good, our eternal good, even after all of the evil that we have brought upon ourselves. Fear not, fellow sinners! We have a Jesus who is greater than all of our sin. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen

Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy rich bounty gave My body, soul, and all I have In this poor life of labor. Lord, grant that I in ev'ry place May glorify Thy lavish grace And help and serve my neighbor. Let no false doctrine me beguile; Let Satan not my soul defile Give strength and patience unto me To bear my cross and follow Thee. Lord, Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord In death Thy comfort still afford.
(*"Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart" LSB 708, st.2*)

Thursday of the 17th Week after Trinity

SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism*: Sacrament of the Altar, part 1

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 1:37-2:15; Matthew 6:1-15

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(*Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar*)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Sacrament of the Altar has many different aspects and dimensions and we speak of it using an assortment of names which all reflect these varied purposes. We can never exhaust this great gift which the Lord has left to us to receive, proclaiming His death until He comes again. Every single word we can say about this gift pales in comparison to this main thing: It is the true Body and Blood of Jesus.

This is why it is called the Sacrament of the Altar. It is, of course, sometimes called the Lord's Table, which is fine, but to refer to it specifically as it relates to the altar confesses a certain thing: that this is the true Body and Blood of Jesus. An altar is a particular kind of table upon which a sacrificial victim is placed. An altar holds a body. This is the true Body of Jesus upon the altar in your church.

This Body gives life. Other food that sustains our earthly life lasts a day or two. Eating the flesh of a cow, chicken, or plants of the earth will keep you alive for a while, but you'll have to eat again tomorrow. The life of the cow is given to you so that you would stay alive. Life really is in the blood.

Unlike steaks or hamburgers, delicious as they may be, the Body and Blood of Jesus gives life that does not expire. His life is given to you in this Sacrament which is distributed from an altar. This life is eternal, for Christ is eternal. He is raised from the dead, and in the eating and drinking of His Body and Blood, you, too, are given eternal life, which means that you, too, will be raised from the dead. This is the gift that can only be given in the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and it is given to you. No representation will do. You need the real thing, because you need real life. Yes, this crucified and risen Jesus Christ, is given to you, bodily, in this Sacrament, that you would rise when He returns. And He will return, but until then, we will continue to rejoice and receive this precious gift of life. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Thy body given for me, O Savior, Thy blood which Thou for me didst shed, these are my life and strength forever, by them my hungry soul is fed. Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood, be for my soul the highest good!
(*"Thy Body, Given for Me, O Savior" LSB 619, st.1*)

Friday of the 17th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 1, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 2:16-37; Matthew 6:16-34

"Do not be anxious about tomorrow."

(Matthew 6:34)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. What do Deuteronomy and the Sermon on the Mount have to do with one another? On the surface, it looks like these are very different writings. Our reading from Deuteronomy promises that the Israelites will defeat their enemies, while Jesus preaches that we should not be anxious because the Lord cares for us more than anything in all creation. Throughout history there have been various heresies which have claimed that the Old and New Testaments even have a different god, because so many things in them seem so unrelated, and even opposed to one another. Could the warlike God of the Exodus be related at all to the peaceful Jesus?

It may be surprising, but these two readings are telling God's people the same thing: Don't worry, because the Lord is on your side. The Israelites are, yet again, face to face with enemies, and the Lord instructs them to have no fear because He goes before and after them. He fights for them. In the Matthew reading, Jesus speaks to people faced with different enemies, but enemies nonetheless.

We are anxious and worried about all sorts of things. Money. Food. Homework. Degrees. Moab. Sihon, the King of Hesbon. Well, maybe not those last two. But you get the picture. God's people are always confronted with enemies. You will always be face to face with enemies of all sorts that seek to rob you of your peace. The Israelites were delivered from the hands of their enemies. They even triumphed over them!

You are given victory over your enemies as well. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have given you peace which passes all understanding. Death and sin will have no power over you. Be strong in the Lord. Do not fear what comes tomorrow, for the Lord is on your side.

You are Israel, taken out of slavery to sin and death, brought through the Red Sea of Holy Baptism, and fed in the wilderness with the Word of God, and even with His miraculous meal, the Lord's Supper. He fights for you, so you may live in peace. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Faint not nor fear, His arms are near; He changes not who hold you dear; only believe, and you will see that Christ is all eternally.

("Fight the Good Fight" LSB 664, st. 4)

The 19th Sunday after Trinity

OCTOBER 10, 2021

Today's Reading: Matthew 9:1-8

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 9:1-22; Matthew 11:1-19

"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'"
(Matthew 8:5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. We need Jesus to be more than just a miracle worker, more than just some carnival barker who sells us snake oil medicine out of the trunk of his car, more than some magic genie who is ready to grant us three wishes in order to make our life a little better. The problem is, we don't realize that we need a Jesus who is better than all of that. "All of that" is what we want Jesus to be. And when He isn't, we get a little angry.

We tend to not care all that much about the forgiveness of sins when temporal suffering and pain are at play. I can just imagine the look on the paralytic's face, on the faces of his friends who had lugged him all that way to see this miracle-man Jesus. For Jesus doesn't immediately heal him of his crooked legs and atrophied muscles. Instead, Jesus forgives the man's sins and tells him to take heart in that.

My goodness! If that isn't the Theology of the Cross, I don't know what is! Jesus doesn't seem to be all that concerned about the temporal, at least not until the eternal is taken care of. We could have everything under the sun placed at our feet (health, wealth, popularity, a great future) but what is all of that when our sins are still upon us?

Jesus doesn't promise us the things of temporal glory. We may very well receive those things from time to time. Then again, perhaps we won't. Maybe we won't be healed of that disease or our parents will still go through with their divorce or our boyfriend/girlfriend will still break up with us. We have no assurance of those things. The assurance that we do have is that we are forgiven. Our temporal life may be in complete disarray, but our eternal life is as sure and steadfast as a crucified Jesus and an empty tomb. And even through all of the trials and tribulations that we endure in this earthly life, the victory over them all is our victory in Jesus Christ and His Cross; for it is there that we receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and merciful God, of Your bountiful goodness keep from us all things that may hurt us that we, being ready in both body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish whatever You would have us do; 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 19th Sunday after Trinity)

Saturday of the 18th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 9, 2021

Today's Reading: Introit for the 19th Sunday after Trinity
(Psalm 78:1-3, 4b; antiphon: Psalm 35:3b; 34:17a, 6b; 48:14a)

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 8:1-20; Matthew 10:24-42

We will tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.

(From the Introit for the 19th Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Is the idea of evangelism frightening to you? Why? I don't know many people who really love the idea of going around and telling strangers about Jesus. Are we even supposed to want to talk to random people about Jesus? Remember, don't talk to strangers... unless it's about Jesus? I don't know many people who do this. I think we're afraid of it.

Perhaps the reason why the broad brush approach to evangelism is so scary is because it seems impossible. Of course, it isn't. The Gospel has been preached to the ends of the earth, which must have seemed absolutely insane to the apostles. How were they supposed to do that? Could they even have imagined that you and I would come to hear of the glorious deeds of the Lord, of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Maybe it wouldn't be so scary if we focused and thought about the next generation instead of a bunch of people whom we don't know. Fathers and mothers teach their children. Children learn and come to fear, love, and trust in the Lord above all things. Evangelism is accomplished primarily through your vocations. It may happen that someone you don't know asks you to explain the hope that you demonstrate, but more often than not, you will be called to give witness to your friends and neighbors.

This is how many of us were brought to the faith. Fathers and mothers brought their sons and daughters to the waters of Baptism, to hear the Word, and receive the Sacrament. Friends and neighbors eventually are brought along, and the coming generations will all hear of the mighty works of the Lord. It has worked this way so far!

After all, you and I have heard of the wonders that the Lord has done and we will not be the last. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Saturday of the 17th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 2, 2021

Today's Reading: Introit for the 18th Week after Trinity
(Psalm 122:1, 6, 8-9; antiphon: Liturgical Text)

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 3:1-29; Matthew 7:1-12

Hear the prayer of Your servants, according to the blessing of Aaron upon your people. *(From the Introit for the 18th Sunday after Trinity)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Apocrypha is a collection of books written during the time between the Old and New Testaments. The number of books varies according to the particular publisher, but there are usually 15 to 20 in these collections. Martin Luther's landmark German translation of the Bible included the Apocrypha in its traditional "in between" place. Lutherans used these books until American publishers left them out of their English Bibles. These books aren't considered Holy Scripture, but they're useful. They have some pretty cool stories in them. You can read about a dragon being blown up with a bomb in Bel and the Dragon. You might even sing the beautiful Song of the Three Young Children during the Easter Vigil, which is the song that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego sang in the fiery furnace.

The Apocrypha is used mainly in Introits or Graduals in today's Lutheran services. They're usually marked as "liturgical texts." Today's Introit uses one of these from Ecclesiasticus 36. This is a book of wisdom from a man named Jesus ben Sirach. It's really good. You should read it.

For instance, this text today beckons the Lord to hear our prayers according to the blessing of Aaron. You've heard the Aaronic Blessing. It is given to you at the end of every Divine Service. "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you. The Lord lift His favor upon you and give you peace!" This comes from Numbers 6:24-26, when the Lord gave Aaron instructions on how to place His Name upon the people of Israel. Ecclesiasticus then prays that the Lord would see and hear us as people who bear the Name of the Lord.

It is the Name of the Lord, tattooed upon you in this blessing, and in Holy Baptism, by which you are seen as righteous and holy. He has put His Name on you! This is why we begin and end everything in the Name of Jesus. The Lord looks with favor on those who bear His Name, which includes you, His beloved baptized saints. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

You spirits and souls of the righteous, bless the Lord; you pure and humble of heart, bless the Lord; let us bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. *(All You Works of the Lord "LSB 931, v.11)*

The 18th Sunday after Trinity

OCTOBER 3, 2021

Today's Reading: Matthew 22:34-46

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

"Which is the great commandment in the Law?"

(Matthew 22:36)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Pharisees often tried to trick Jesus by asking Him questions that don't have good answers. Ask your dad which one of his children is his favorite. There's no good answer. So which commandment is the great one? Are there any of the Lord's commandments that are lesser or greater than another?

We all have a little Pharisee in us. We all try to get around the Lord's Word here or there. You might think that this sin might not be too bad because it isn't one of the BIG sins. Right? Can you covet so long as you don't steal? Can you look, but not actually commit adultery? Can you just hate someone and speak against them without murdering them? That is a very dangerous game.

Good news, though. Jesus doesn't play that game. He refuses to rank the commandments. Instead, He sums up the whole entire Law in two concepts: Love God and love your neighbor. That is all. You cannot itemize and rank your sins. You either love God and your neighbor or you don't.

It is not as if Jesus came to die for the little forgivable sins, but not for the big bad ones. He came to deal with all of your sins, whether you think they are small or great. The truth is that all sin is committed for the same reason: that we do not fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We let our idolatries run our lives, and so we commit all kinds of sins against God and our neighbors, precisely because God is not put first.

So, when you find yourself asking whether or not one sin is worse than another, remember the Pharisees. Don't do that. Do not play that game. It leads to death. Repent of every last one of your sins, and see that Christ has died for every single one of them. All of the Law and prophets depend on this, for these all look forward to their fulfillment in Christ. He has come to forgive all sins, even the little ones. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, because without You we are not able to please You, mercifully grant that Your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; 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 18th Sunday after Trini

Friday of the 18th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 8, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 7:1-19; Matthew 10:1-23

"If anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town." (Matthew 10:14)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. How often have you worried about someone you love who does not believe in Jesus? It happens all the time. Fathers worry about their children's faith. You worry about your friends who do not love Jesus. I worry about people who have left the faith.

Stop that right now. If you have spoken the words of Christ to the people you love, then you have done enough. If you have forgiven your friends in the Name of Jesus, it is enough. If you have borne witness to Jesus Christ in your words and life, then it is enough.

We are not called to nag people into the kingdom of heaven, but rather to proclaim that it has come in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, I don't know anyone who has successfully been nagged into the faith. You're also not called to come up with new and fancy ways to argue people into the faith. That won't work, either.

You've been called simply to tell the truth, which can be a difficult enough task in a world full of lies. But there's a funny thing that happens when you tell the truth and speak of Christ. Truth always prevails over lies. Lies fall away. Clever tricks are shown to be empty. Eventually the one doing the nagging goes away. But the truth sticks.

If you tell the truth and speak of Christ, then you have nothing to worry about. If they reject these words, shake the dust from your feet and move on. They will not forget The Word of God has a way of taking root in the hearts and minds of people. Move on and stop being afraid. If they reject you, they are rejecting Christ. We've seen this before. He was rejected all the way to the Cross. He was denied and buried. Jesus is not worried, either. No, He is risen and His will is done. Do not be afraid. He is patient and wise. He knows what He is doing. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

If God Himself be for me, I may a host defy; for when I pray, before me my foes, confounded fly. If Christ, my head and master, befriend me from above, what foe or what disaster can drive me from His love?

("If God Himself Be For Me" LSB 724, st.1)

Thursday of the 18th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 7, 2021

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 6:10-25; Matthew 9:18-38

Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. (Matthew 9:35, Evangelical Heritage Version)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Matthew 9 is a whirlwind of activity. As soon as Jesus finishes healing one person, someone else is begging for His mercy. In one instance, He is on the way to heal someone, and another person chases Him down, trying only to touch His clothes, and even she is healed. Jesus brings forgiveness and life wherever He goes. Death flees before Him.

Do not be troubled by the apparent lack of miracles in our day. Remember that these people all saw and experienced great things, but still ended up nailing Jesus to a cross. You are not saved by miracles, but by grace through faith in Christ. I sometimes think of Jesus like the star quarterback, lifted on the shoulders of the crowd, who are just thrilled that He's done something amazing. I'm wrong. He was despised and rejected, even when He was doing these great things and forgiving sins.

Matthew 9:24 says that they laughed at Him when He said that a dead girl was just sleeping. He knew the truth: that her death had been overcome. They laughed. A few verses later, He is accused of casting out demons by the ruler of demons. He did not win many friends, and most of the friends He did have ended up rejecting Him.

And yet He continued to preach, teach, and heal their diseases and sickness, even though they rejected Him and nailed Him to the Cross to die, He still calls out for their forgiveness. He casts out demons and brings life. We have not always hailed Him as our king. Have you even laughed at Jesus? Have you mocked Him?

He has not rejected you. He still comes to you. His Word is still given to you, poured upon your head in Baptism, sung into your ears through the church's liturgy, and given into your mouth in Holy Communion. Jesus will not give up on you. He has come to you, and you have life. That is a miracle. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Monday of the 18th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 4, 2021

Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 10:12-21

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 4:21-40; Matthew 8:1-17

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. (Deuteronomy 10:17)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul." No big deal, right? Look at all the great stuff God has done for you. You owe Him. Honestly, you owe Him more than He asks. He hasn't just saved ancestors. He hasn't just given you all you have in this life. He sacrificed His Son to save you. Repent. Repent, because it isn't God who would use His good works as leverage to extract something from you. It's you who use your works as leverage to demand from God. It's you who think your good deeds require recompense from your neighbor. God did not send His Son to die as a guilt trip.

And more, it wouldn't have even worked. We are indebted to God. That's not in question. But it's like handing a 4-year-old a bill for room and board. They can't pay it. You can't, either. God doesn't want you to. He is not partial and takes no bribes. He just loves sinners. Even you, who can't hear His promises without thinking about leverage and paybacks. For even this, Jesus has died for you. You are forgiven. Not because you'll ever earn it, but because God loves you.

He loves us so much that He wants to see orphans and widows and sojourners cared for even though they can't pay. He gives it all as a gift. That which He requires of you? He fulfills it for you in the person of His Son. He works it through you for the good of your neighbor. The Law demands more than we could ever give. But God provides everything the Law demands. That way your works aren't your praise. Your God is. He is the one who has accomplished all for sinners. Jesus paid everything for you. You owe nothing. Rejoice in Him who made you free. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The royal banners forward go; The cross shows forth redemption's flow, Where He, by whom our flesh was made, Our ransom in His flesh has paid. ("The Royal Banners Forward Go" LSB 455, st.1)

Tuesday of the 18th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 5, 2021

Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 5:1-21; Matthew 8:18-34

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours... (1 Corinthians 1

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. I have a bad habit of skipping Paul's greetings. Get to the point, my friend. We can pretend I'm so pious that I just can't wait to get to the good stuff. The introductions are always more or less the same. You shouldn't recycle material, Paul. It's lazy.

When it comes to Corinth, I think maybe the introduction is the point. Read it. It doesn't sound like the Corinth that we hear about in the rest of the letter. This doesn't sound like a church divided. Full of sexual immorality, idolatry. Ignoring the widows in order to get drunk. Mishandling the Lord's Supper. Bragging about spiritual gifts to raise themselves above each other. Corinth is messed up. But Paul writes to the holy ones, sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Because that's who they are. The thing that unites us across time and space, that lets Paul write an introduction to Corinth that sounds like the introduction to Galatia and Ephesus and Philippi, is the Gospel: grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Corinth is not known by the cesspool of sin, but by the God who promises to give grace, forgiveness, and peace. The testimony is confirmed among the believers there. Their sins are forgiven because Christ is risen from the dead. Because Christ gives them His Body and Blood to eat and drink. Because Christ unites them into one Body. The proof of Christianity isn't in our works, but God's.

He joins us into fellowship across time and space into the mercy given by the Cross. The introduction is the point because God's Word does what it proclaims. It gives grace, mercy, and peace to them, and to you. That sustains us to the end. Guiltless. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Oh, blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine; Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine. Alleluia! Alleluia!

("For All the Saints" LSB 677, st.

Wednesday of the 18th Week after Trinity

OCTOBER 6, 2021

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Sacrament of the Altar, part 2

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 5:22-6:9; Matthew 9:1-17

Where is this written?

(Small Catechism: Sacrament of the Altar)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Sacrament of the Altar is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ given for Christians to eat and drink. This is a strange thing to believe. It looks like mere bread and wine. All that we can see with our eyes and taste with our tongue is wheat and grapes. We like to believe what we can see, feel, taste, touch, and see.

Unfortunately, our senses are not the final authority on reality. Things can be real that we cannot sense. Your home can be filled with poisonous gasses that you cannot smell. This is why you have CO2 detectors. Likewise, humans understand about 5% of what exists in the universe, while the other 95% is referred to as "dark." We just don't know how it all works, only that it somehow does. So we must have reasons for the things we believe, particularly when it comes to matters of the Christian faith. We can't just make up things or rely on feelings, or even on our senses.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul all tell us that Jesus says that this is His Body and Blood. John also speaks of it, but in different words that assume you already know about the Lord's Supper. The presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar has been the life of the Christian Church since Maundy Thursday, when it was first given. Why? Because our Lord Himself has given it to us.

Make sure that your beliefs come from the Word of the Lord. Humans have believed all sorts of weird things over the centuries, many of which have proven to be harmful and even fatal. Many have strayed from the Lord's Word and were led to destruction. The Lord, through His Word, will keep you on the way of life and preserve you from death.

Lutherans are sometimes criticized for putting so much emphasis on Holy Baptism, the Office of the Keys (Confession and Absolution) and the Lord's Supper. We only do this because Jesus has given these to us. We've kind of put everything behind Christ and His words. A man-made religion just won't do. It's got to come from the Lord. Ask the question! Where is this written? And if it is written, then we ought to believe it. The Word of God is trustworthy and true. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

His Word proclaims and we believe that in this Supper we receive His very body, as He said, His very blood for sinners shed.

("The Death of Jesus Christ, our Lord" LSB 634, st.