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

Unless otherwise noted, Biblical quotations are from the ESV.

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The Reflections for Trinity 5-6 were written by Rev. Kyle Mietzner, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, Anchorage, AK.

The Reflections for Trinity 7-8 were written by Rev. Joel Shaltanis, pastor of Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Plano, TX.

The Reflections for Trinity 9-10 were written by Rev. David Magruder, pastor of Peace With Christ Lutheran Church, Fort Collins, CO.
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 5:1-11  
**Daily Lectionary:** Judges 7:1-23; Galatians 1:1-24

We toiled all night and took nothing.  
*(Luke 5:5)*

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Fishing techniques have changed little over the centuries. Peter, James, and John worked all night long and had nothing to show for it. Anyone who has fished knows exactly what that means! Your hard work does not necessarily correspond with any sort of result. The hardest physical work I’ve ever done was on a fishing boat. Whether I worked hard or took a nap mattered little to the fish in the sea. They either swam into the net or didn’t. My work had little to do with that. They were either there or they weren’t.

This is exactly how it goes in the Kingdom of God. Have you toiled all night, all day, or for your whole life, and feel like you’ve got nothing to show for it? Your friends and family see your work, and still don’t care about Jesus? Worse yet, do you feel that perhaps you aren’t as solid in your faith as you’d like to be? Are you worried about yourself and those around you, and where they stand with the Lord?

Stop worrying. The rules don’t change. The disciples toiled all night long, yet took nothing. Their nets were empty with their own work, even though they’d exerted a titanic amount of force and skill in their craft. “What does man gain by all his toil under the sun?” *(Ecclesiastes 1:3)* Sometimes we gain nothing, and that is just fine.

Jesus appears, commands the fish to swim into the net, and so they go! We are all lost if salvation and faith are up to us, and our work. We’ll never find enough, and we’ll never be able to convince anyone else, either. What fish willingly swims into a net? Salvation and faith are gifts of Christ! As He swam the fish into the net, so He gives these gifts of life and salvation to you. Rejoice in the giving of the gifts! You’ve been swept up into the net of Christ’s Church, and His work continues even today. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

O God, You have prepared for those who love You good things that surpass all understanding. Pour into our hearts such love towards You that we, loving You above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; 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 Fifth Sunday after Trinity)*

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**Saturday of the Tenth Week after Trinity**  
**AUGUST 22, 2020**

**Today’s Reading:** Introit for Trinity 11  
*(Psalm 68:1, 3, 7a, 10b, 19; antiphon: vs. 5b, 6a, 35b)*  
**Daily Lectionary:** 1 Kings 2:1-27; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

O God, when you went out before your people, in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy. Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation.  
*(From the Introit for the 11th Sunday after Pentecost)*

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The Introit for tomorrow is drawn from the words of Psalm 68. Like all the other psalms, the 68th is a prayer. It doesn’t seem to us like much of a prayer because it doesn’t ask for anything. Instead, it is a song of thanksgiving for the great works of God.

That’s how prayer is sometimes. There are days when we can only cry out to God from within our pain. Sometimes we run out of words to say or are so beaten down that we have to rely on the Holy Spirit to cry to God on our behalf *(Romans 8:26)*. And then there are days when we are filled with joy and our prayers reflect it. If you take a quick look at just a handful of psalms, you’ll find both kinds of prayer. We are blessed to have the psalms to pray from our own lips.

Psalm 68 moves us to praise God for His goodness. He is the God who rescues His people. He scatters His enemies and those who hate Him flee before Him! He gives power and strength to His people and provides for the needy. He bears us up and He is the God of our salvation.

When the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh tell you that God is not for you, pray this psalm. When your guilty conscience shouts that you could never be forgiven, pray this psalm. When shame over sin makes you feel completely unlovable, pray this psalm. When the events of your life scream at you that God is absent, pray this psalm.

For the One who bears you up is the One who was lifted up on a cross to remove the burden of your sin and shame. Jesus is the One who settles you into a home called the Church. Jesus is the One who is your salvation from death! Indeed, blessed be the Lord, who daily bears you up; God is your salvation. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Father like He tends and spares us; well our feeble frame He knows; in His hand He gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes. Alleluia, alleluia! Widely yet His mercy flows.  
*("Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven" LSB 793, st.3)*
Friday of the Tenth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 21, 2020

Daily Lectionary: 1 Kings 1:1-4, 15-35; 1 Corinthians 12:14-31

But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as He chose. (1 Corinthians 12:18)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. What a strange conversation Paul presents to us: body parts talking to each other! The foot seems depressed because it has the boring work of supporting the body. It is not like the important hand with its opposable thumb! The ear is jealous of the eye and in their envy and jealousy, the foot and the ear want to quit the whole body. But if they were to jump ship, there would be no body at all. God put each part in the body “as He chose. You are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

Paul is not talking about some imaginary world of talking body parts. He is speaking about you! Earlier in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul wrote, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

As a baptized child of God, you are joined to Jesus and made part of one body—the holy Christian Church. This means that you are never alone in this life of faith. You are an important member of one body. You don’t share the same gifts as other parts of the body—and that is ok. God provides the necessary parts to make the body whole and He connects them all to the head, Jesus.

The result of that connection to Christ creates an amazing thing—a body that lives in the forgiveness given by Jesus and shares such love with the whole body. You, who were baptized into one body, express that Baptism with Spirit-gifted acts of love. Instead of being jealous of other parts of the body of Christ, you are concerned for them (1 Corinthians 12:25) as Jesus is for you. You love, serve, and forgive as you are loved, served, and forgiven in Christ. That is how God chose to arrange it and to that we say, “Amen”! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, let this Your little flock, Your name alone confessing, continue in Your loving care, true unity possessing. Your sacraments, O Lord, and you saving Word to us, Lord, pure retain. Grant that they may remain our only strength and comfort. Amen.

(“Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s Head” LSB 647, st.2)

Monday of the Fifth Week after Trinity
JULY 13, 2020

Today’s Reading: 1 Kings 19:11-21

After the earthquake, a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. (1 Kings 19:12)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. How often do we look or wait for some obvious and huge sign from God? Wouldn’t it be easier if we just had some loud and significant indication that the Lord was real? You’ve heard people say things like, “I just need a sign, and then I’ll believe!” The Lord did many great works through the prophet Elijah. Elijah had witnessed amazing thing after amazing thing: miracles, endless supplies of oil and flour, resurrection, even fire called down from heaven consuming massive piles of sacrificial animals! He saw it all! Yet he runs and is afraid for his life. The Lord had shown Elijah great wonders demonstrating His power and might, but he was afraid of mere humans who wanted his death. How is it possible that someone who had seen these great signs would still flee and cower in fear?

We humans are so weak in faith! We only believe what we can see, and even then still find ourselves in fear and doubt. Elijah had substantial proof that he served the one, true God, but even then, he wasn’t quite certain of God’s power to save and protect. The Lord knows that you won’t believe the big things.

The Lord instead speaks to you in little ways that are quite unimpressive to the world. Paul speaks of this as the foolishness of God, which is wiser than men (1 Corinthians 1:25). He has spoken to you in Holy Baptism, in Holy Absolution, and in the Holy Eucharist. The Lord has given you His sure and certain Word. These are all things which the world can easily disregard, but to you, they are the power and voice of the Lord Himself. Even while we are hidden away, the Lord continues to come to us and speak. Do not fear! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, You commanded the wind and the waves, and they obeyed You. Speak peace to us, who are troubled by fear. By the power of Your Word, calm our anxious and doubting hearts and the raging storms of our spirits; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
Tuesday of the Fifth Week after Trinity
JULY 14, 2020

Today's Reading: 1 Peter 3:8-15
Daily Lectionary: Judges 14:1-20; Galatians 3:1-22

Always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. (1 Peter 3:15)

In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen. Christians can be weird. We've always been like this. From the very beginning, people noticed that we are different. Tertullian, a Christian living in the second and third centuries, wrote to the Roman authorities, defending Christians. He says that people used to insult Christians, saying, “See how they love one another.” We gathered money for the weak and poor. We adopted children who had been abandoned. We opened hospitals to care for the sick. We weren’t looking for personal wealth or great fame. People noticed that Christians looked out for the weakest people, and cared little about their own comfort.

Many of the earliest Christian writers after the New Testament era sent letters to suspicious governmental authorities. People like Justin Martyr and Augustine of Hippo engaged in this work, defending the faith to those who had asked for a reason for our hope. They noticed that we were different. We were hopeful in a world of fear.

What is the reason for our hope? Simply put, our hope is in Jesus. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified, buried, and is now risen from the grave, has ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father. This is our hope. Now that Jesus Christ has conquered death, there is nothing to fear.

Embrace the weirdness of not being afraid of death for the sake of Christ. Love one another as if there were no reason not to! We have nothing now but love. Defend it! In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty Father, You have raised Your Son Jesus Christ from the dead, and united us to His resurrection in Holy Baptism. Therefore, we pray that You would take from us the fear of death in such a measure that we would be filled with nothing but faith towards You and love for our neighbor. Give us willing and noble hearts, always ready to make a defense for the hope that You have given to us, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Samuel
AUGUST 20, 2020


And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked for him from the Lord.” (1 Samuel 1:20)

In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen. The conception and birth of the child named Samuel was miraculous. His barren mother, Hannah, was gifted with a son. Israel was gifted with a great prophet. It was Samuel who reluctantly anointed Saul to be king over Israel and later would anoint the shepherd-king, David, to rule in place of Saul.

Samuel’s work as a prophet was not what we would call successful. The people, more often than not, would ignore Samuel’s preaching and thereby ignore the God whose Word he spoke. That is nothing new for God’s servants. So why appoint a day to remember another rejected prophet of God? Well, days commemorating saints of old aren’t really about those saints. They are about remembering the work of God through them. Samuel served as God’s hand and voice in anointing David as king over Israel, and we know where that led. Centuries after Samuel, God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin, who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, to announce another miraculous birth. To Mary, the messenger of the LORD made this promise about the child she would bear: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32-33).

Samuel was given the joy of being part of that unfolding promise. We are given the joy of knowing the promise fulfilled in Jesus. King Jesus was conceived and took on human flesh in the womb of Mary. King Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophets’ preaching. King Jesus, David’s greater son, was enthroned on a cross to redeem you and the whole world. King Jesus defeated death by rising again and King Jesus reigns and intercedes for you even now. Blessed are you! In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, in Your mercy You gave Samuel courage to call Israel to repentance ad to renew their dedication to the Lord. Keep us and all your people in the grace of repentance, that by the blood of Jesus, the Son of David, we may continually receive and rejoice in the forgiveness of all our sins; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.
But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

(2 Samuel 11:27b)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The effort that King David expended to cover his sin is staggering. That level of deceit took a lot of thought and planning and the cold way in which he reacted to the news of Uriah’s death is sickening.

Of course, we would never be like David, would we? You know that is a lie. You are an adulterer, you who look at another lustfully. You are a murderer, you who destroy the reputation of others with your gossip. You are a deceiver, you who put the blame on others for your own sin.

The things you have done displease the LORD. So what is there to do?

“What is confession? Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.”

This is not some new idea flowing Martin Luther’s imagination. As you read the account of how God dealt with David’s sin in 2 Samuel 12, you see that Confession and Absolution has been God’s way all along. God sent a pastor to King David. Nathan the prophet preached God’s Word to David and it worked repentance and confession from David’s lips. And Pastor Nathan spoke Absolution to David: “The LORD has also put away your sin; you shall not die.” Forgiveness as from God Himself.

So it is for you. God uses your pastor to deliver the goods: repentance and forgiveness. Release from guilt, shame and death in the words of Absolution. How do you know it’s true? It is as sure as Jesus’ cross-death and resurrection. As sure as the nail marks in His living hands and feet and the spear mark in His pierced side. As sure as the water flowing on you and the Triune Name of God spoken over you in Baptism. The LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Lord, on You I cast my burden – sink it in the deepest sea! Let me know your gracious pardon, cleanse me from iniquity. Let your Spirit leave me never; make me only Yours forever. Amen.

(“Lord to You I Make Confession” LSB 608, st.4)
Ruth
JULY 16, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Judges 16:4-30; Galatians 4:12-31

Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. (Ruth 1:16)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The book of Ruth sits in between Judges and 1 Samuel as a wonderful little story about life during the time of the judges. Before Israel had a king, they had judges, people who were sent by the Lord every so often to restore them to faithfulness. The book of Judges has a poetic refrain: “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” The Lord had taken the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land. Yet they continually turned away from the Lord and towards the idols of the people in the surrounding countries.

Who belongs to the Lord? Does it matter where you were born or who your parents are? What if you were born to a family who knows nothing of Jesus? The book of Ruth gives us these answers. The Lord brings His people to His truth, regardless of who they are. The people of Israel had a sort of dangerous security because of their bloodline. They thought that they were safe because they were children of Abraham! Children of Abraham who worship idols no longer follow the God of Abraham who led them out of slavery.

Ruth, however, was from Moab. She was born an enemy of God, as we all are. Yet, the Lord brought her to Himself through a rather unpredictable path of famine, death, and marriage. She was adopted into God’s family, the Church. So it goes for all of us! The Lord calls to all people, regardless of their lineage or nationality. Baptized into Christ, we who were foreigners and aliens are brought in and given a new home with the Lord’s people in the Church.

Ruth’s story is given to us at the perfect place in the Bible. The end of Judges is bleak, and one might think that there is no hope for anyone. Yet Ruth shows us that the Lord gathers His Church, from unexpected places with unexpected people! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, Your children come from the four corners of the earth, and from every nation under heaven. As you have adopted us into Your family, we pray that You would continue to draw us together from all peoples. We give thanks for Your daughter, Ruth, in whom Your mercy and love has been shown; in the Name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Tuesday of the Tenth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 18, 2020

Today’s Reading: Roman 9:30-10:4
Daily Lectionary: 2 Samuel 7:18-20; 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:16

But that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. (Romans 9:31-32a)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. There is nothing wrong with trying to do your best. It is what is expected of you at school, at home, and at work. Your neighbors (teachers, family, and your boss) are blessed by such efforts. But don’t bring that idea into your relationship with God. It didn’t work for Israel and it won’t work for you. The huge rock of the Law will crush you under the weight of its demands and the perfection that God’s Law requires of you will always be out of reach.

The apostle Paul works this truth to a fine point in our reading for today. Israel couldn’t reach a right relationship with God because they had the devilish idea that it was up to them to make it happen. They ran smack into the promise of God to save the world by His mercy, they stumbled over it, and kept on going with the idea that they had to do more good things to make God like them.

You get sucked into thinking that way as well. Repent. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” No more struggling and striving to keep the Law for salvation! The Law works as a pointer, an arrow aimed straight at the target of Christ. Christ Jesus is where we find that the demands of God’s Law have been met. God’s righteousness is met in Him as well. Jesus’ perfect keeping of God’s Law is what makes you right with God. His perfect life is given into death in your stead—instead of you! You get all the benefits of what Jesus did with no strings attached. Faith trusts this promise, and faith is what you have been given as pure gift from the Triune God! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, Your children come from the four corners of the earth, and from every nation under heaven. As you have adopted us into Your family, we pray that You would continue to draw us together from all peoples. We give thanks for Your daughter, Ruth, in whom Your mercy and love has been shown; in the Name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Law reveals the guilt of sin and makes us conscience-stricken; but then the Gospel enters in the sinful soul to quicken. Come to the cross, trust Christ, and live; the Law no peace can ever give, no comfort or no blessing. (“Salvation Unto Us Has Come” LSB 555, st.8)
Monday of the Tenth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 17, 2020

Today’s Reading: Jeremiah 8:4-12
Daily Lectionary: 2 Samuel 7:1-17; 1 Corinthians 9:24-10:22

Even the stork in the heavens knows her times, and the turtledove, swallow, and crane keep the time of their coming, but my people know not the rules of the Lord. (Jeremiah 8:7)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. A bird has more sense than you do! That is the message God used to invite His people to return to Him. We call that the preaching of repentance. The people rejected the invitation and yet Jeremiah kept up the call. The meaning of Jeremiah’s preaching is clear: even the birds, irrational creatures, know their appointed time and return to their homes, which they have left. Instinctively, they follow the pattern fixed for them by their Creator: they travel hundreds of miles, because that’s what they’ve been created to do. Unbelieving Jerusalem had sunk below the common sense of a bird!

What is sadder than the people’s refusal to hear the Word and return to the Lord their God is that they had forgotten how much God loved them. “My people know not the rules of the LORD.” That is a tricky translation. The Hebrew word is mishpat which means righteous judgment. It’s not just rules to be followed but also a declaration of innocence.

The people were so caught up in themselves that they pushed aside the mercy and promises of God: His just decrees and the justice He had done and would do for them. That is a picture of us, too. Sad to say, but we know it is true. Thankfully, God still sends Jeremiah to stick His Word into our ears and call us to repentance and faith.

God the Father would fulfill all His righteous promises in Christ. Instead of pouring out the punishment for sin upon the world, the Father pours it on His Son. At the Cross the righteous judgment of the Law is proclaimed. Jesus is overthrown in death, but only for a time. Jesus, the perfect One, rises from the grave and brings you along with Him. Jesus took your place in death on a cross and in a stone-cold tomb so that you would know God’s righteous judgment: You are free from sin and death in Jesus. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Now my conscience is at peace; from the Law I stand acquitted. Christ hath purchased my release and my ev’ry sin remitted. Naught remains my soul to grieve: Jesus sinners doth receive.

("Jesus Sinners Doth Receive” LSB 609, st.7)

Friday of the Fifth Week after Trinity
JULY 17, 2020

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 1:1-20; Galatians 5:1-26

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. (Luke 24:45)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The opening chapter of Samuel belongs in a category all its own. It is nearly comedic. Hannah, who has not been able to bear children, is surrounded by men who can’t understand her. She has rivals who irritate her because of her sad circumstances. She deals with these people year after year. Her husband doesn’t understand her. Her priest doesn’t understand her. The people who are supposed to be her friends do not understand her.

The story would be cruel if the author did not know the ending. But he does, for Samuel himself seems to be the author of the first 25 chapters of this book. He is telling the story of his own birth, before which his mother was surrounded by fools who failed to understand her. She piously desired children, but no one offered any sympathy. This is the stuff of comedy, for it all ends well. Otherwise, it would just be another sad story.

I have a hunch that most of us think that the Bible is sad and boring because we’ve somehow been told that the Bible is sad and boring. But it’s exactly the opposite. Not only is it fascinating, it is life-giving. It will restore and refresh your soul, for it is the very living Word of God. If we have eyes to see, and ears to hear, these stories are full of life, and even laughter. The Lord is known to laugh from time to time! (Psalm 2)

How many people see Jesus as a dour bringer of punishment rather than the giver of life? See, He has set us free! He does not desire your eternal misery, but perpetual joy and life! We should not be surprised when the Holy Scriptures, the very Word of God which testify to Christ (Luke 24:27) turn out to inspire joy within us.

Hannah was given a child by the Lord, even in the midst of those who did not understand. How often are we surrounded by people who don’t understand us? Do not lose hope! The Lord controls all things. Feel free to laugh! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, grant us a steadfast faith in Jesus Christ, a cheerful hope in Your mercy, and a sincere love for You and one another, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen!
**Saturday of the Fifth Week after Trinity**

**JULY 18, 2020**

**Today’s Reading:** Introit for Trinity 6
(Psalm 28:1-2, 7; antiphon: v. 8-9)
**Daily Lectionary:** 1 Samuel 1:21-2:17; Galatians 6:1-18

_The LORD is my strength and my shield._
(From the Introit for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ✞ of Jesus. Amen. The Lord is everything. He is the strength of His people. He is our strength. He is our shield. The Lord is the source of our life and our defense against all that would harm us. David prays these things through Psalm 28 after having come close to death himself. It was not a rare thing for him to be near death! People were trying to kill David for much of his life. He knew that to be near death was to rely on nothing but the Lord’s grace and mercy.

There are times when we feel like we can’t keep going. It is precisely in these times that we stop and pray that the Lord would listen. He has promised to hear the prayers of His people. We see the Lord’s strength in our weakness. The ability to be brought low is a great skill which we learn throughout our lives (Philippians 4:12). We are filled with Christ when we are emptied. He called you as His living child in Holy Baptism, and continues to fill you with life through His Word. He is your everything, and sometimes, you realize this!

There is nothing shameful about being brought low. You do not need to be embarrassed of being empty. Rather, we rejoice in our own weakness, and celebrate the strength of Christ, who was emptied on the Cross, and raised from the dead by the glory of the Father so that we would walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

We have nothing to be frightened of if He is our strength and our shield. Nothing can harm Him, and so nothing can harm us, who are protected and enlivened by Christ. Do you sometimes feel that you can’t even begin to stand and walk? That’s okay. He is our shepherd and carries us forever! In the Name ✞ of Jesus. Amen.

_O Lord, support us all day long, guide and strengthen. Evening comes, the world is hushed, Shadows lengthen, Work is done, Life's fevered pace now has ended; Christ, to You, our final rest is commended._

_Be our light in darkness, Lord, our defender; In Your presence perils all must surrender. Drive all dark satanic snares from each dwelling; Then, at peace, our hearts Your praise will be telling._

("Lord, Support Us All Day Long" LSB 884, st.1-2)

**The Tenth Sunday after Trinity**

**AUGUST 16, 2020**

**Today’s Reading:** Luke 19:41-48
**Daily Lectionary:** 2 Samuel 6:1-19; 1 Corinthians 9:1-23

_And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.” (Luke 19:41-42)_

In the Name ✞ of Jesus. Amen. Interesting, isn’t it? Jerusalem contains the word “peace” (salem) in its name yet does not recognize the peace of God in the flesh as He prepares to enter her gates.

As Jesus wept at the death of His friend Lazarus and the lack of faith that doubted Jesus could call him out of the grave, so Jesus weeps over a people who cannot know and see (believe) that He has come to bring them peace. But those tears do not keep Him from His appointed task.

In Luke 18, Jesus told His disciples what would take place in Jerusalem: "See we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day, he will rise" (Luke 18:31-33). Ironically, Luke tell us that this news was hidden from the disciples’ eyes as well.

Why would these things be hidden from their eyes? Because Jesus needed to fulfill His work. Nothing of what He said or did would make true sense until He died and rose from the dead. The people of Jerusalem sought peace by other means. The disciples wanted a “Son of Man” who would be triumphant, not someone who would die nailed to a Roman cross. We make our own “peace” treaties with God on our own terms.

But it is the Cross and, finally, the resurrection of Jesus that changes everything. Your eyes have been opened to see and your hearts made new to believe: “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). Jesus does not now weep over you. He rejoices over you who are baptized and receive His peace! In the Name ✞ of Jesus. Amen.

_O God, you declare your almighty power above all in showing mercy and pity. Mercifully grant us such a measure of Your grace that we may obtain Your gracious promises and be make partakers of Your heavenly treasures; 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 Tenth Sunday after Trinity)
**St. Mary, Mother of Our Lord**

**AUGUST 15, 2020**

**Today’s Reading:** Luke 1:39-55  
**Daily Lectionary:** 2 Samuel 5:1-25; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

*And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”*  
*(Luke 1:46-49)*

In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen. The Church honors significant people of faith throughout the year. They serve as witnesses to us of the faithfulness of God and we are therefore encouraged to follow their example in faith and life. This day, we give thanks to God for Mary, the mother of Our Lord.

In his magnificent commentary on the Song of Mary, Luther wrote these words: “Whoever, therefore, would show her (Mary) the proper honor must not regard her alone and by herself, but set her in the presence of God and far beneath Him, must there strip her of all honor, and regard her low estate, as she says; he should then marvel at the exceedingly abundant grace of God, who regards, embraces, and blesses so poor and despised a mortal. Thus regarding her, you will be moved to love and praise God for His grace, and drawn to look for all good things to Him, who does not reject but graciously regards poor and despised and lowly mortals. Thus your heart will be strengthened in faith and love and hope. What do you suppose would please her more than to have you come through her to God this way, and learn from her to put your hope and trust in Him, notwithstanding your despised and lowly estate, in life as well as in death?”

“Notwithstanding your despised and lowly estate”—what wonderful words! Mary recognizes the truth. She is not worthy of this gift from God, yet she receives it in faith. Mary is a picture of us! We deserve the fruits of our sin—death! But in Mary’s Son we are given resurrection life. Notwithstanding our despised and lowly estate, we are highly exalted by God and remembered in His mercy. In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen.

*Almighty God, You chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of Your only Son. Grant that we, who are redeemed by His blood, may share with her in the glory of Your eternal kingdom, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen*  

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**The Sixth Sunday after Trinity**

**JULY 19, 2020**

**Today’s Reading:** Matthew 5:17-26  
**Daily Lectionary:** 1 Samuel 2:18-36; Acts 15:22-41

*Everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, “You fool!” will be liable to the hell of fire.*  
*(Matthew 5:22)*

In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen. It is grave mistake to think that we can just do whatever we want because we’ll be forgiven. Is there any serious Christian who actually thinks that they can give in to the passions and desires of their flesh and still claim citizenship in the kingdom of heaven? We are not antinomians, people who claim that the old laws no longer apply to Christians.

In fact, it is exactly the opposite. The Law applies to you more than it ever did to anyone else. You thought it was enough just not to kill someone, but Jesus says that you have already murdered if you even insult someone! That seems a bit harsh doesn’t it? Your mere words can be the same as murder! Perhaps you’ve been the subject of murderous words already? Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words can never hurt you? No one actually believes that. Words kill. You know what power they carry. Maybe Jesus was right.

Jesus does not let you off of the hook. He does not accept your excuses, nor is He looking for them! He doesn’t want to hear your halfway apologies for what you’ve done. He really does want you to be reconciled to your brothers. But who is able to put aside their anger and insults? Not me. Jesus desires that all people would be reconciled to one another. In His death and resurrection, Jesus reconciled and restored all the world to God the Father, canceling all of the debt and pain which we had by being nailed to the Cross (Colossians 2:14). In this same death and resurrection, Jesus also reconciled us to one another, because we would not and could not do it on our own. Be reconciled to one another, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who has gifted us with this glorious peace! In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen.

*Lord of all power and might, author and giver of all good things, graft into our hearts the love of Your great name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Your great mercy keep us in the same; 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 Sixth Sunday after Trinity)*  

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Monday of the Sixth Week after Trinity
JULY 20, 2020

Today’s Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Exodus 20:2)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The Ten Commandments are beautiful. They were given to the people of Israel, who had been liberated from slavery in Egypt and were being led through the wilderness into a land flowing with milk and honey, full of towns and habitations that they hadn’t built but would be given. They were taken from nothing and were being given everything. They were taken out of death and put in to life.

What does life look like for liberated slaves who are being given everything? The Lord knows what is best for them. When they come into the land that the Lord is giving them, this is what they should do and how they should live. In short, they should love God and love their neighbors, and everything will be beautiful and lovely.

We sometimes trick ourselves into believing that things are accidentally bad, that somehow things just ended up like they are and we didn’t have anything to do with it. It is not that we don’t know what to do. We know exactly what we should be doing. World peace? Harmony? Unity? We’ve had the formula for goodness for thousands of years!

The only problem is that we can’t and won’t keep the rules. We are tempted and fooled into thinking that there is something better out there for us. The people of Israel couldn’t fulfill the commandments, and neither can we. No one can. It is only in Christ that we see the beauty of perfection shining forth (Psalm 50:2). He is the picture of goodness, who keeps these beautiful commandments for us. He is the truly liberated One, who leads a host of captives (Ephesians 4:8) into a new world of love, perfection, and holiness, fully realized in the life to come. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

These are the holy Ten Commands God gave to us by Moses’ hands
When high on Sinai’s mount he stood, receiving them for our good.
Have mercy, Lord!

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.1, 12)

Friday of the Ninth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 14, 2020

Daily Lectionary: 2 Samuel 1:1-27; 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short...For the present form of this world is passing away. (1 Corinthians 7:29a, 31b)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The appointed time has grown very short. The present form of this world is passing away. Some days those words ring so true. We see the disruption and frustration that sin brings into this world. Our graduation celebrations are cancelled because of a virus. We are isolated away from our friends at school, church, and work. Weddings are postponed indefinitely. The present form of this world is passing away.

Yet some days, Paul’s words sound just too negative for us. We have joy. We are free from anxiety in our callings. We become betrothed to another and rejoice.

So what should our view of life look like? A gloom that paralyzes us or unbridled joy? God’s Word shoots it right down the middle for us with words from the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7. Applying wisdom that can only come from God, Paul reminds us to live life with one eye on this life and one eye on the Last Day. During the time that remains for us in this world, we focus on things that are eternally important. That doesn’t mean that we should ignore the joys and gift of this life, like friendships or marriage, but that our lives would not be preoccupied in this “passing away” world.

In another place, Paul puts it this way: “...as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and possessing everything” (2 Corinthians 6:10). What a freeing way to live life! We know that Jesus has overcome the world. Our sins are washed away in His blood. Baptism has joined us to Jesus forever. His Body and Blood feed and sustain us. We are free to live in joy and free to look forward to the new heavens and new earth, the home of righteousness. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

The night will soon be ending; the dawn cannot be far. Let songs of praise ascending now greet the Morning Star! All you whom darkness frightens with guilt or grief or pain, God’s radiant Star now brightens and bids you sing again.

(“The Night Will Soon Be Ending” LSB 337, st.1)
Thursday of the Ninth Week after Trinity  
AUGUST 13, 2020

**Daily Lectionary:** 1 Samuel 31:1-13; 1 Corinthians 7:1-24

So they cut off his head and stripped off his armor and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people.  

(1 Samuel 31:9)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. It ended so badly for Saul. The one whom the prophet Samuel had anointed as king over Israel dies by his own hand in the midst of a battle that he never should have fought.

Saul's death wasn't an honorable one. His body was mutilated and hung on a city wall. What was good news for the Philistines was deflating news for Israel. The dishonorable death of Saul was the sad result of his lack of fear, love, and trust in God. In fact, his last recorded meal was in the house of a medium after he consulted with a demonic spirit masquerading as the ghost of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 28).

But that isn’t the whole story for Israel. David had been anointed king (1 Samuel 16:1-13) and was alive. God’s promise to have an “anointed one,” a Messiah for His people, would hold true. “I will raise for up for Myself a faithful priest...and I will build him a sure house, and he shall serve in my presence forever” (1 Samuel 2:35).

God holds true to His promises. In the fullness of time He sent His Son, David’s Lord and David’s heir. On a cross outside a city wall, naked and bleeding for the world to see, the King of the Jews died a dishonorable death, and it was the Lord’s doing. It seemed like good news to an idolatrous world hostile to the Gospel of forgiveness and life. But the death Jesus died, He died for all that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5). What seems a most dishonorable death works life and salvation for the world, and for you.

Saul’s unfaithfulness and shameful death could not overcome the faithful promise of God to send a savior King. We are recipients of truly Good News that faithful messengers have preached to us: Jesus’ death and resurrection have overcome the binding power of sin and set us free to live in His mercy and bear His grace to the world. We are not left to a dishonorable end. We are honored to be included in Jesus’ death and to live in resurrection-to-life hope! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

I thank Thee, Jesus, Sun from heaven, whose radiance hath brought light to me; I thank thee, who has richly given all that could make me glad and free; I thank thee that my soul is healed by what Thy lips revealed. (“Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower” LSB 694, st.3)

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Tuesday of the Sixth Week after Trinity  
JULY 21, 2020

**Today’s Reading:** Romans 6:3-11  
**Daily Lectionary:** 1 Samuel 4:1-22; Acts 16:23-40

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?  

(Romans 6:3)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Do you not know? Paul assumes that the baptized Christian faithful know what has happened to them. In Holy Baptism, you are united with Christ in His death and resurrection. They are literally given to you through water and Word. Cyril of Jerusalem preached a collection of sermons to the newly baptized in which he repeatedly told the people what had happened to them. Why? Because it is easy to forget! How quickly we forget what has happened at the font! Yet it is a reality which underpins our entire existence. You were crucified with Christ! You were put to death with Jesus! Gazing upon the crucifix, we behold not only our dying Lord, but our own death. Time folds in upon itself, and we are there with Him, and He is here with you. So then, when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, it is not only His victory over death, but yours also. You are alive!

You are dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Paul uses no conditional terms here. There’s no negotiation. He doesn’t ask you if you really meant it or if you really believe it. This is your new reality. You have died in Holy Baptism, and are now living a new life in Holy Baptism. All of your life is lived from the font, from the water and the Word. You are alive, even if you forget that you are alive!

Now that you know that you’ve died to sin, what will you do? How will we live our new lives in which death is defeated and life has come? What does life look like for the one who has walked with Jesus through death and the grave? We live without the fear of death, walking in the joy of new life! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

There is nothing worth comparing to this lifelong comfort sure! Open eyed my grave is staring; even there I’ll sleep secure. Though my flesh awaits its raising, still my soul continues praising: I am baptized into Christ; I’m a child of paradise!  

(“God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It” LSB 594, st.5)
Today's Reading: John 20:1-2, 10-18

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!”  (John 20:18)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Happy Easter! This really doesn't say everything we need to say, does it? Easter conjures up images of rabbits delivering eggs to children who then have to search and retrieve them. While these can certainly be Christian images, they don't quite capture the joy that Mary has. Happy Easter? How about this: “I have seen the Lord!” Try it out! Say it out loud!

No one believed her, and who could blame them? Men don’t rise from the dead, especially not after dying like Jesus died. Crucifixion leaves no doubt about a man’s fate. There’s no recovery after being nailed to a cross and left to die. She’d been there when Jesus was taken down and carefully laid in His borrowed tomb. There’s a reason He didn’t buy one for Himself though: He wasn’t going to use it for very long.

Imagine the tomb salesman, perplexed that Jesus said He would simply borrow one because He’d only need it for three days. Jesus’ resurrection doesn’t really make sense to anyone. It runs against everything we know about how the world works, because we live in a world that is fueled by death. We keep enough weapons around to make sure no one tries anything. We keep peace with the threat of death. Jesus does the exact opposite. He gives peace by defeating death! It is hard to believe, isn’t it? Thank God for Mary Magdalene, who first ran shouting, “I have seen the Lord!” And then the disciples, too, who came to believe and proclaim as well, “I have seen the Lord!” Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, Your Son, Jesus Christ, restored Mary Magdalene to health and called her to be the first witness of His resurrection. Heal us from all our infirmities, and call us to know You in the power of Your Son’s unending life; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.  
(Collect for St. Mary Magdalene)

Wednesday of the Ninth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 12, 2020

Today's Reading: Small Catechism: Baptism
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 28:3-25; 1 Corinthians 6:1-20

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.  
(1 Corinthians 6:11)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. What a gift! A gift that keeps on giving! Holy Baptism. I have always been struck by the profound simplicity of Luther’s words in the Small Catechism and their faithfulness to the witness of the Bible. From beginning to end, the catechism reminds us that our relationship to God comes about by His grace.

My favorite part of the catechism is our reading for this day: Holy Baptism, part 4. It distills into one beautiful (and long) sentence numerous biblical truths about salvation and then it perfectly connects them to Holy Baptism.

What does Baptism mean for you? It means the daily death of your Old Adam and the emergence of the new man made righteous and pure by water and Word. And what is that Word? “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Daily death and life in Jesus. Yes, the event of water and Word being applied to you happened once, in time. But the remembrance of your Baptism is a daily reality. You’ve heard it before: we don’t say, “I was baptized.” we say “I am baptized.” It is an ongoing reality worked by Jesus.

You are joined to Jesus’ death and raised with Him. You now walk in a new life created and sustained by the Father, in the Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit. To see what that beautiful and wholesome life looks like, read the entire text for today from 1 Corinthians 6! It is a beautiful description of what it means to be washed and made holy (sanctified) in Jesus. And so you are! Baptized! Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

So use it well! You are made new—in Christ a new creation! As faithful Christians, live and do within your own vocation, until that day when you possess His glorious robe of righteousness bestowed on you forever!  
(“All Christians Who Have Been Baptized” LSB 596, st.6)
Tuesday of the Ninth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 11, 2020

Today’s Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:6-13
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 26:1-25; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.
(1 Corinthians 10:12)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. The apostle Paul was a super-religious guy in his previous life. We also know him as Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee of Pharisees. He had his religious life all neatly packaged up, ready to give to God with the expectation that God would reward him for his good efforts and works. Paul would learn, in baptismal wonder, that such ideas were foolish (Acts 9). Salvation does not rest in any human. It is a gift granted for the sake of the death and life of Jesus alone.

It seems like Paul is quoting a Proverb he surely had memorized in his Pharisee days: “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). Some in the church at Corinth prided themselves on their own super religiosity and spiritual strength. They should be careful, Paul warns, not to fall from grace. That is a good warning for us as well. It keeps us from centering our life of faith on us instead of the One who really makes it all possible. It works repentance in us and moves us back to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Along with Paul’s warning, he adds a beautiful word of promise: We will not be tested beyond our God-given capacity. When faced with trials, we can count on God’s faithfulness. “God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God remains faithful to the promise He made to you in Baptism. He will be with you always (Matthew 28). He has joined you to Jesus, the One who overcame every temptation and trial by His perfect obedience and death. The resurrected Jesus is there with forgiveness and mercy when you do fall. With every trial He will give you strength to endure and will, in His own time, create the “way out”! In Christ, there is no need to stand on anything but His promise! In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Why should cross and trial grieve me? Christ is near with His cheer; never will He leave me. Who can rob me of this heaven that God’s Son for me won when His life was given?
("Why should Cross and Trial Grieve Me" LSB 756, st.1)

Thursday of the Sixth Week after Trinity
JULY 23, 2020

Today’s Reading: Small Catechism: Baptism

Baptism is not just plain water… (Small Catechism: Baptism, pt. 1)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Any church with a prominent baptismal font invites the question, “Is that holy water?” I’ve been asked this any number of times. There are two answers: yes and no. The water in the baptismal font that is used to unite sinners with Jesus comes from a tap in the back room at church. There is nothing holy or special about the plumbing. The faucet is not even gold plated. At my church, the bowl which holds the water in the font is obviously an old mixing bowl that came from someone’s kitchen. Holy? Hardly. No, the water isn’t blessed or holy. It is plain water.

But it is not just plain water! It is water and Word together that make a Holy Baptism! What makes it holy? The holy Word of God makes this water holy, for the sinners who are brought to this water are made holy here. There is nothing special about this water, but when it is brought together with the Word of the Lord, something very special happens. A new man arises from the font, buried and made alive in Christ.

When our Lord Himself came into this world and was baptized in the Jordan River, He made all water holy. The very water in the river was dignified by the Lord’s Baptism, the Word made flesh, dwelling among us. Some people make a big deal about being baptized with water from the Jordan River. That river kept flowing that day, and the water has spread through all the earth. The water in your shower is as holy as the water in the font. Now, all things are holy, set aside for the Lord’s purposes. You are holy, living in a holy world, with a holy people, because you have a holy Lord. Rejoice! In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Merciful Father, through Holy Baptism You called us to be Your own possession. Grant that our lives may evidence the working of Your Holy Spirit in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, according to the image of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen!
Friday of the Sixth Week after Trinity
JULY 24, 2020

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 8:1-22; Acts 21:15-36

He even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.
(Acts 21:28)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The early days of the Church were lived in the shadow of the temple. It wasn’t immediately apparent that we shouldn’t keep going there. The Jerusalem church went to the temple daily in the days after Pentecost. It was truly a house of prayer for all people. The rhythm of Sabbath Saturday and the Lord’s Resurrection Day of Sunday was kept. Paul could find no reason why everyone shouldn’t be going to the temple. The dividing wall of hostility had been broken down in Christ! (Ephesians 2:14) There was no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile, slave or free, male or female. All are one in Christ!

It is an amazing thing that there aren’t different Sacraments for different people. The water of Baptism is poured onto every head, whether rich or poor, man or woman. All are brought to Christ. The words of forgiveness spoken to sinners do not change based on who has confessed and what their place in life might be. You don’t get extra forgiveness if you give more money to the church. All are forgiven in Christ. The Holy Supper is not given with better bread and wine to those who have more money. All are rich at the Lord’s altar!

Paul actually believed all of these things, and brought a man from Ephesus into the temple. He escorted a Gentile into a place where he was forbidden, and ended up facing a long journey, trial, imprisonment, and eventually death, for believing in the reconciling work of Jesus Christ. Yet even then in his sufferings, Paul continued to proclaim the great works of Christ. Friends, we cannot lose, for Christ has given us the victory. There is nothing to fear. Not even death will hold us down. All things work for your good. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

In Christ now meet both east and west; In Him meet south and north. All Christian souls are one in Him Throughout the whole wide earth. (“In Christ There Is No East or West” LSB 653, st.5)

Monday of the Ninth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 10, 2020

Today’s Reading: 2 Samuel 22:26-34
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 25:23-44; 1 Corinthians 4:1-21

He makes my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. (2 Samuel 22:34)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Really, David? Your elderly feet like the feet of a deer? You couldn’t even protect your old self from the Philistines and had to be told by your soldiers to just stay home and not get yourself killed (2 Samuel 21:17).

David believed something that his soldiers would not: God the LORD was at work for the sake of His people. Whether David lived or died, it was the mercy of the LORD that would endure. The perfect Word of the LORD always proves true; He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him, old and young alike.

David believed the promise that God had made to Adam and Eve, confirmed to Abraham, and restated to him: God would send One who would redeem the world from sin and the death that comes through sin. He would send One who would be King over all the world and live forever. The LORD kept His promise and sent the world David’s greater son, Jesus. Jesus brings the light of forgiveness and life into the darkness of the world. Jesus is the mercy of God in the flesh. Jesus is blameless yet bears our blame and guilt on the Cross. Jesus rose from the grave and will give our dead bodies their resurrection, too. Jesus sets us secure on the heights, washed and fed at His font and table.

Old David wasn’t delusional, he was filled with faith by the mercy of God. He lived by faith in God’s promise that even his tired old bones would be renewed in resurrection life. His sin would be answered for by another, Jesus, and his way made pure and blameless for all eternity.

Such is your life. The merciful LORD has redeemed you in His Son. Your sin is answered for and your death overcome by the Christ. “This God – His way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in Him” (2 Samuel 22:31). In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

This is a sight that gladdens – What peace it doth impart! Now nothing ever saddens the joy within my heart. No gloom shall ever shake, no foe shall overtake the hope with God’s own Son in love for me has won. (“Awake My Heart, with Gladness” LSB 467, st.3)
The Ninth Sunday after Trinity
AUGUST 9, 2020


You cannot serve God and money (Luke 1:13)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Yes, Jesus, we get it. We cannot serve God and money. If only it were that simple. The new you in Christ says a loud “Amen” to the word of Jesus that concludes the parable of the rich man and the shrewd manager. However, the old sinful you cannot say “Amen” to Jesus’ conclusion.

We are faithless in the management of much and very little. We love money and the security it brings. If only we had more. We serve money with our time and talent as if it were a god and not a gift from the One whose hand supplies all our needs of body and soul. We get it all backward: We live in service to money instead of recognizing that money serves us. So this parable becomes a call to repentance. Put to death the dishonesty and idolatry that dogs you day by day. We pray with saint/sinner David, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:1-2).

The key to wrapping your heart and mind around the meaning of this parable is to focus on the mercy of the rich man, not the dishonesty of the manager. Mercy.

The dishonest manager was commended because he chose to serve his lord, who he trusted would be merciful. He used unrighteous wealth to achieve his goal, though he trusted not in the wealth but in his merciful master.

In Luke 12:34 Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be.” Faithful disciples will be commended for seeing that the crucified and risen Jesus is their treasure, and for trusting in His mercy. And that mercy is delivered to and for you this day in Jesus’ Body and Blood which keeps you, body and soul, now and forever. That’s mercy! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Let your merciful ears. O Lord, be open to the prayers of Your humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please You; 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 Fifth Sunday after Trinity)

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St. James the Elder, Apostle
JULY 25, 2020

Today’s Reading: Mark 10:35-45

Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. (Mark 10:43)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. It’s an astonishing statement, that in order to be great, you must be a servant. We don’t understand. All of our lives are spent in constant pursuit of personal achievement. We’re taught that we need to really try to be something. Goals are set and achieved. Awards are won. Recognitions and prizes are handed out. We think that we’ve become great if we have made a name for ourselves and climbed to the top of the pyramid.

The disciples obviously thought that Jesus was destined for something big. They thought that He would be the one to restore peace to Israel by leading a political movement. They wanted in on the glory! They wanted their friend Jesus to remember them when He sits on the throne! Maybe a cabinet position would get thrown their way. They think like we do. Greatness and glory are things to be achieved by winning all sorts of contests. But they know not what they ask. They cannot bear the burden that Jesus will bear. He is great, but not because He has achieved popular support or fame. He is great, because He has become the servant of all. He has borne the sin of the world upon His shoulders, and taken it all to the cross and grave. The sin of the world was nailed to the cross in the death of Christ (Colossians 2:14). This is true greatness. He suffered everything for us, ultimately serving us by giving His very life, pouring it into us in Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist. He has become great by serving us greatly, and in so doing, has given us to share with Him in His glory, His death and resurrection. You are great in Him! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Praise we Him, whose love divine Gives His sacred blood for wine, Gives His body for the feast, Christ the victim, Christ the priest. Alleluia! (“At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing” LSB 633, st.4)
The Seventh Sunday after Trinity
JULY 26, 2020

**Today's Reading:** Mark 8:1-9
**Daily Lectionary:** 1 Samuel 10:1-27; Acts 22:17-29

> [Jesus said], “I have compassion ...”  
> (Mark 8:2a)

In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen. Why does Jesus do the things He does? What moves Him? John wrote that Jesus was “full of grace” (John 1:14). Grace is God’s unmerited favor, His unearned love for His creatures. He doesn’t bless those who deserve it, but His blessings are given to those He loves, to those who need them.

Mark records in our text that Jesus saw the crowds and said, “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.” Compassion: This is why Jesus blesses. This is grace, His unmerited favor. This is love in action. He sees people in need and provides for them. At this time and place He miraculously provided food for their bodies. He provided more than enough, so that everyone ate and was satisfied and there was plenty leftover.

At other times Jesus provided for people by healing diseases or restoring sight and hearing. Many times He cast out demons. A few times He even raised loved ones from the dead. Jesus has tremendous power because He is the Son of God and He has come to use this power to help those in need.

Man’s greatest need is forgiveness and reconciliation to God. He is holy, but we are sinful and fallen, not what we were supposed to be. Jesus came to take on this greatest need and provide more than enough. He takes on our filth and makes us clean.

Sometimes a certain sin can haunt you. Maybe you have done something for which you are truly ashamed. The devil loves to throw it in your face and get you to doubt whether you can really be forgiven. Always remember: Jesus is full of compassion. He provides us with assurance, too, by giving His forgiveness through the Word of the Gospel, in the water of Holy Baptism, and at the altar. There, too, He gives you bread to eat that is His very Body. Eat and be satisfied! Your sins are forgiven! His grace is sufficient. In fact, it is more than enough! In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen.

**O God, whose never-failing providence orders all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly implore You to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things that are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.**

(SSLB 524, st.3)

Saturday of the Eighth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 8, 2020

**Today's Reading:** Introtit for Trinity 9
(Psalm 54:1-3, 7; antiphon: v. 4-5)
**Daily Lectionary:** 1 Samuel 24:1-22; 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:16

> O God, save me by your name...  
> (From the Introit for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen. David cries out to God in a time of trouble. He is being persecuted by King Saul, and the locals where he is hiding out, the Ziphites, have given him up (1 Samuel 23:19-29, 26:1-5). David is in trouble, his enemies are closing in, and danger is imminent. What does he do? He calls on the Name of the Lord.

As you know from your catechism, God’s Name is more than His title. It is also His character and reputation. To call on the Name of the Lord is to call on God, who is all powerful and able to save. God commands us to use His Name correctly. How is this done? By doing what David did, namely, “Call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks.”

Where do you turn when danger is near? Many turn to false gods like money: “If only I were rich, then I wouldn’t have to worry.” Some turn to family and friends, the government, or doctors, depending on the problem they face. None of these things are bad in themselves. In fact, they can all be precious gifts of God intended for our good. The problem arises when we place our trust in the gifts and forget the Giver. God is “my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.” All of us fail to trust as we should. We worry and fret, placing our hope in the wrong things.

Jesus Christ knew His enemies would not triumph over Him. He had perfect trust in His heavenly Father even though He knew that great suffering and death lay ahead. Nevertheless, He didn’t waiver on His way to the Cross: “Not my will but thine be done.” And with His face set like flint, He pressed on to the Cross, calling out to His Father throughout and entrusting Himself into His hands. His perfect trust and obedience have ultimately delivered us from every evil in this life and for all eternity. In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen.

**Dear name! The rock on which I build, My shield and hiding place; My never-failing treasury filled With boundless stores of grace.**

(“How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds” LSB 524, st.3)
Friday of the Eighth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 7, 2020

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 20:24-42; 1 Corinthians 1:1-25

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. It isn’t easy to be a Christian. People are openly hostile toward us. This is nothing new, as we see in 1 Corinthians. Paul writes: “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing.” The root Greek word here is moros, from which we derive the English word, “moron.” This is what many in Paul’s day thought of Christians, especially the Greeks and Jews! “But we preach Christ-crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.” For Jews, the idea of a crucified Messiah was an utter contradiction. They thought the Messiah would be a powerful leader like Moses or David. They couldn’t understand how an executed criminal could be the promised Messiah. Likewise, Gentiles thought it pure folly, for they loved philosophy and great learning and were also impressed with power.

The hostile reaction to our crucified Lord, both then and now, shouldn’t surprise us. We know that we couldn’t believe it either, were it not for the working of the Holy Spirit. As the catechism says, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel…” The Word of God not only says things, it does things. The Law accuses us of sin, brings about shame and remorse, and leads us to turn to God for help. Then the Word of the Cross, the Gospel, comes as the greatest news: that God Himself has put our sin on Jesus, who willingly endured our punishment so we can be forgiven. While some think it folly, Christians know it has the power to save: “It pleased God through the ‘folly’ of what we preach to save those who believe.” This “foolish” preaching of a slain Savior has the power to save: “It pleased God through the ‘folly’ of what we preach to save those who believe.” This “foolish” preaching of a slain Savior has been the central message of the Christian Church from the beginning.

We should not get angry with those who think we are fools, for it is only on account of God’s grace that we are not exactly like them. Certainly we shouldn’t water down the message of our crucified Jesus to try and make it more attractive. Instead, the answer is to keep doing what faithful Christians have always done: to simply rely on the Word of the Cross, the message of Christ crucified. For those who are being saved, it is the power of God. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Word eternal, throned on high, Word that brought to life creation, Word that came from heav’n to die, Crucified for our salvation, Saving Word, the world restoring, Speak to us, Your love outpouring.

("Word of God, Come Down on Earth" LSB 545, st.2)

Monday of the Seventh Week after Trinity
JULY 27, 2020

Today’s Reading: Genesis 2:7-17

Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (Genesis 2:7)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Do you have questions about science and the Bible? Most thoughtful people do, especially when it comes to the issue of creation and what it means to be human. Christians affirm what Scripture teaches: that God spoke the world into existence and willed everything into being. The other side contends that everything in this universe just happened by random chance and came about as a result of an accident.

This is ultimately what the science and faith debate is about: Is there purpose or meaning to this life and everything in it, or is the universe just a bunch of random, meaningless chaos? Is man a special creation of God, made in His image and endowed with the gifts of reason and a soul? Or are human beings just highly evolved animals destined for extinction like every other species?

Christians may disagree about how literally to take certain parts of Genesis, but regarding the central issue of meaning and purpose, there is no debate. Here Scripture’s teaching couldn’t be clearer: God deliberately (on purpose) created man by breathing life into him (Genesis 2:7). He did so separately from the animals (Genesis 1:26) because man is not like the animals. Man is an image-bearer of His Maker. Every single human is of inestimable worth. We are so valuable that when this first command (Genesis 2:17) was disobeyed and our first parents fell into sin, God wouldn’t let them be lost forever. God would send His one and only Son to ransom sinners and give everlasting life to all who trust in Him.

Some of you will be headed off to college soon. You will likely encounter the atheistic worldview, if you haven’t already. Some teachers you encounter will even tell you that if you take the Bible seriously and believe in a Creator, you have no hope of being any kind of credible scientist. Don’t believe it for a second. Some of the greatest scientists in history were Christians and many Christians continue to work in the sciences. Our lives have meaning because we are created and redeemed children of our Heavenly Father. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. Amen. (The Apostles’ Creed)
**Tuesday of the Seventh Week after Trinity**

**JULY 28, 2020**


When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

(Acts 23:12)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Ever feel like people are out to get you? Maybe you have been bullied or had a friend betray you. Maybe someone told lies about you or posted awful things about you on social media. As difficult as that was, it doesn’t compare to what Paul went through.

Paul was a hated man. As we read in Acts 23, 40 men made an oath not to eat or drink until they killed him. By their actions, you might think those men were outlaws, part of some terrorist cell or a street gang. But they were nothing of the sort. They were religious zealots, ultra-conservatives, wild-eyed fundamentalists convinced they were doing God’s will.

One of the greatest evils in the world is religion gone bad, for when someone does evil in the name of religion, they actually believe they are doing good and will justify anything. The Jews who killed Jesus and the Jews plotting to kill Paul had wandered so far from God that in their minds they could justify murder, counter to the Fifth Commandment, in order to quiet a dissenting voice. These plotters were not merely a rogue faction, but they were working with the consent of the authorities (Acts 23:14).

Mercifully, God rescued Paul at this time. Paul’s nephew caught wind of the plot and alerted the Roman authorities, who swept in with a small army to rescue this one imprisoned preacher. Some 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen whisked Paul away in the middle of the night (Acts 23:23).

What was Paul’s great crime? He was trying to make Jesus known to his fellow Jews. As a Jew who had once persecuted Christians, he wanted Jews to know that the Messiah had come and fulfilled the Law perfectly and that the plot they were working with had been against a man who had come to bring life and salvation. Paul faced opposition at other times when he was shut down and violently persecuted. But these Jewish leaders at Rome were willing to talk with a fellow Jew about the Kingdom of God and decide if what he said was true.

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Why doesn’t everyone respond the same way to the Gospel? In Acts 28 we see a mixed response to Paul’s mission work among some Jewish leaders in Rome. They had heard about Christians and how this ‘sect’ was being spoken against everywhere, but they were willing to let Paul make the case. This is commendable! Paul faced opposition at other times when he was shut down and violently persecuted. But these Jewish leaders at Rome were willing to talk with a fellow Jew about the Kingdom of God and decide if what he said was true.

All day Paul expounded from the Scriptures, “testifying to the Kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus.” In the end, some were convinced and some weren’t. Paul then cited the prophet Isaiah’s stern warning about dull hearts, blind eyes, and deaf ears that refuse to repent and be healed. (Acts 28:26-27) This book that tells us how the Word of God spread closes with a story of how some believed and some did not.

Like Paul, we should be well versed in Scripture so we can testify to what Jesus has done, but we should not get discouraged when people do not believe. Paul was the greatest missionary and theologian of all time and he didn’t convert every person who heard him. Even the people who listened to Jesus and witnessed His miracles did not all become disciples. In fact, many rejected Him and violently opposed Him.

It is a frustrating thing to have the lifesaving medicine in your hands only to have the dying person tell you, “Nah, I don’t want it,” or even worse, “Get that stuff away from me!” You know they need it, but you can’t force it down their throats. You can only keep offering, and pray that the person will be open to receiving. God Himself can bring these changes in people. His Word can soften hard hearts.

God has called you to believe and has brought you to faith. You have been born again and your sins are forgiven in Jesus. While you and all believers, the angels in heaven, and God Himself long for more people to come into the kingdom, let us be grateful that God in His grace has called, gathered, and enlightened us. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

*In chains for Christ! His prisoners love to sing, For slaves and free rejoice to praise our King. What though the Church on earth still suffers wrong? The cross of Christ remains our pilgrim song.*

(“The Saints in Christ Are One in Every Place” LSB 838, st.2)
Today's Reading: Small Catechism: Baptism

How can water do such great things?
(Small Catechism: Baptism, pt. 3)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Plain water. Not mineral water, spring water, or even water from the Jordan River. We are talking about plain water—but not water alone.

Human beings have a tendency to make too much of the ceremony or the physical element in the Sacraments. In the Middle Ages, instead of eating the communion bread, people would sometimes try to sneak a piece of it into their pockets so they could have Jesus with them like a magic charm all week long! People can be very superstitious and miss the point of things.

But the big deal in Baptism is not the water, it’s the Word of God! “Without God’s word the water is plain water and no Baptism. Our faith is not in water but in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, who died for our justification and rose again from the dead that we might have life in His Name. Why then put such an emphasis on Baptism? Because Jesus, our Savior, gave us Holy Baptism and through it He generously pours out the Holy Spirit. Through Baptism, He makes us children of God and heirs of the heavenly kingdom.

There may come a time when your sins accuse you and you begin to wonder, “How do I know I am a Christian?” If you look to your own life for assurance, you will be left wanting. Instead, look to Christ on the Cross and remember your Baptism. You are not declared righteous before God because of your exemplary life; on the contrary, you have been justified by God’s kindness and mercy toward you. By grace, He has made you an heir of heaven and given you the hope of everlasting life. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

God’s own child, I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ! He, because I could not pay it, Gave my full redemption price. Do I need earth’s treasures many? I have one worth more than any That brought me salvation free Lasting to eternity! Sin disturb my soul no longer; I am baptized into Christ! I have comfort even stronger: Jesus’ cleansing sacrifice. Should a guilty conscience seize me Since my Baptism did release me In a dear forgiving flood, Sprinkling me with Jesus’ blood?

(“God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It” LSB 594, st.1-2)
Thursday of the Seventh Week after Trinity  
JULY 30, 2020

Today's Reading: Small Catechism: Baptism
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 15:10-35; Acts 24:24-25:12

[Baptism] works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe...

(Small Catechism: Baptism, pt. 2)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. You probably have Christian friends who belong to a church that doesn’t baptize infants. While these fellow Christians have much in common with us, like a high regard for Scripture and the belief that we are saved by grace, they are very far from us and from the historic teaching of the Church, and indeed, from Scripture itself on the matter of the Sacraments. What’s more, these differences can get pretty heated. Those who deny God’s gift of Baptism to little children may question whether your Baptism really counts, if you were baptized as a child. They may even try and tell you that you need to be baptized for real.

It comes down to a question of what Baptism is and does. Is Baptism my promise to God, or God’s promise to me? If Baptism is some kind of law, or something I must do for God, then we should wait until a child is old enough to understand what he or she is doing. But if Holy Baptism is of the Gospel, then it is a gift from God and we dare not withhold it from children.

Lutherans understand that Baptism is pure Gospel. It is God’s gift and promise to us. As Luther states in the catechism, “It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.” This is not merely Martin Luther’s opinion, it is what the Bible teaches.

Baptism forgives sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16). It clothes us with Christ’s righteousness (Galatians 3:27). It unites us to Christ and to His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5, Colossians 2:11-12). Baptism sanctifies, making us holy (1 Peter 3:21, Titus 3:5-8, Ephesians 5:26). The action is all from God to us. He is active and we are passive.

There is no reason at all to question whether your Baptism counts. You have received from God a wonderful blessing. Through Holy Baptism you have been rescued from death and the devil and united to Christ and His resurrection. Don’t question, but rather, rejoice in your Baptism and trust the One who gave it to you. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

All Christians who have been baptized, Who know the God of heaven, And in whose daily life is prized – The name of Christ once given: Consider now what God has done, The gifts He gives to everyone – Baptized into Christ Jesus! (“All Christians Who Have Been Baptized” LSB 596, st.1)
Monday of the Eighth Week after Trinity
AUGUST 3, 2020

Today’s Reading: Jeremiah 23:16-29
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 17:48-18:9; Acts 27:9-26

Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. (Jeremiah 23:16)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Sometimes people speak carelessly in order to sound pious. Have you known Christians who confidently say, “God has put it on my heart,” or, “God revealed it to me...”? Unless you are referencing the Bible, speaking this way can be used to justify sin.

Today’s passage speaks of lying prophets who claimed to have dreams from God. Instead of calling people to repent, these impostors were telling people whatever they wanted to hear. These false prophets affirmed the sins of denying God’s Word and stubbornly following one’s own ideas, telling the people everything would be fine (Jeremiah 23:17).

Nothing has changed. Some still deny God’s Word and convince themselves that God has revealed to them His approval. Others, seeking to live contrary to God’s Word, will find a religious official to give them the permission they seek. Sex outside of marriage? Just as long as you are in love and use protection. Abortion? A sad necessity, but a woman’s right. Homosexuality? It can’t be wrong if God made you that way. Find almost any sin and some false prophet will justify it for you.

It was into this sort of setting that God sent Jeremiah. He called out the false prophets saying, “How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophet who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart...?” But God said, “... let him who has my word speak my word faithfully.” We, too, should speak God’s Word faithfully and above all, tell the people everything would be fine (Jeremiah 23:17).

Restrain, O Lord, the human pride That seeks to thrust Your truth aside Or with some man-made thoughts or things Would dim the words Your Spirit sings. (“Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide” LSB 585, st.5)

Friday of the Seventh Week after Trinity
JULY 31, 2020

Today’s Reading: Romans 6:19-23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Freedom! It sounds and feels so sweet! It means getting to do whatever we want with no one telling us what to do, right? That’s how many think of freedom. “Just wait until I get out of the house!” It all sounds good until you get to experience that unfettered freedom for the first time and realize the costs that come with freedom.

Some learn about these consequences when going off to college for the first time. They stay up all night playing video games, watching movies, surfing the web, or hanging out with friends. Maybe they sleep in and miss a class or two. Others experiment with forbidden fruits: porn, booze, sex, drugs. Mercifully, most young adults learn some hard lessons and figure out how to manage their freedom and the responsibility that comes with it. But sometimes this unharnessed freedom results in bitter consequences. When that happens, they realize their newfound freedom only ended up in a kind of slavery.

Some of the Romans used to live like this: “You once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness... But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?” Paul answers his own question, “The end of those things is death.” Christians do not and cannot use their freedom to do whatever selfish and irresponsible thing they want, for they have been set free from sin and now are slaves (or servants) of righteousness.

Christians have been set free already. It isn’t that we might be set free from sin if we are good enough. No, no one is good enough, not even one (Romans 3:10). The exception is the only one from heaven, Jesus Christ. Christ has already won our freedom from sin by shedding His blood and dying for our sins on the Cross, and paying a ransom for our freedom. He has set us free so we can live forever! True freedom isn’t “doing whatever you want.” Rather, it is living sanctified lives under the forgiveness of Christ Jesus, knowing we are free to serve the living God without fear. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Praise the Lord, His reign commences, Reign of life and liberty- Pascal Lamb, for our offenses, Slain and raised to set us free! Evermore Bow before Christ, the Lord of Life adore! (“All the Earth with Joy Is Sounding” LSB 462, st.4)
Saturday of the Seventh Week after Trinity
AUGUST 1, 2020

Today’s Reading: Introit for Trinity 8
(Psalm 48:1, 3, 11, 14; antiphon: v. 9-10)
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 17:1-19; Acts 26:1-2

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised...
(From the Introit for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. I once heard an atheist make the snide remark, “Your God must have a low self-esteem, as much as He needs you to praise Him!” That misunderstanding reduces praise of God to cheap flattery. The Lord God does not require anything from us. When the Lord’s saints in heaven and on earth praise Him, it is not because He needs us to, but because we need to praise Him! We can’t help ourselves.

Let’s say you lost your phone and couldn’t afford a new one. When your friend Gabriel heard, he decided to upgrade to a brand new phone so he could give you the one he was using. What would you do? Of course, you would thank Gabriel and tell him how much you appreciate his kindness. Thanksgiving is a very important kind of praise. But you would probably go beyond that. Anytime someone noticed your phone you would be quick to tell them how your good friend Gabriel gave it to you.

In the same way we might praise a good friend, praising God is recognizing Him for who He is and what He has done. It is telling the truth about Him and extolling His goodness, not in an attempt to flatter Him, but as a sincere expression of our gratitude. We want others to know how blessed they are by God, so we extol His virtues with our praise, so they join our adoration of the God we love and who loves us.

God’s steadfast love for us deserves our highest praise. He loves sinners, the weak, all those who fall short and are in need of forgiveness. His steadfast love was made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ, who took on our sins and died for them on the Cross. This compels us praise God because we are forever grateful and will sing our songs of praise now and forever. We also praise the Lord and extol what He has done so others might know of His enduring love and join in the never-ending song. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

As I pray, dear Jesus, hear me; Let Your words in me take root. May Your Spirit e’er be near me –That I bear abundant fruit. May I daily sing Your praise, From my heart glad anthems raise, Till my highest praise is given In the endless joy of heaven.

(“Speak, O Lord, Your Servant Listens,” LSB 589, st.4)

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity
AUGUST 2, 2020

Today’s Reading: Matthew 7:15-23
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 17:20-47; Acts 26:24-27:8

“No not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”
(Matthew 7:21)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Our Lord warns us that there will be false teachers and we are to be wary of them. Christians naturally want to do this, but we don’t always recognize false prophets and false prophets don’t advertise that they are false! As Christ said, they come in sheep’s clothing, though inwardly they are vicious wolves. He says there is a way to know the difference between the false and the true: “You will know them by their fruit.”

But some false prophets will even preach Christ and perform miracles in His Name. Surprisingly, some of these hypocrites won’t even know they are hypocrites! Jesus says they will be confused at the Last Day, saying, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your Name, and cast out demons in your Name, and do many mighty works in your Name?” It makes us wonder if we can tell them by their actions after all. This makes it sound as though we are sitting ducks, or sheep anyway! Fortunately, Christ provides the solution to this problem in the very next verses. He said, “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock” (Matthew 7:24-25).

Christ promises that He will not leave us all alone in the fight against evil. He promises that whoever hears His words and puts them into practice is going to be okay. He guarantees that we will face tough times, but if we remain in His Word, we will not be overcome by them. He is the Good Shepherd and He will fight to keep us safe. He has already laid down His life for the sheep only to take it up again by rising from the dead. This gracious act has won salvation for us and we receive this salvation through faith. Christ also gives us His Word to save us, with the promise that people who hear the voice of the shepherd, our faith will be kept strong by hearing His Word again and again and following where He leads us. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord take my hand and lead me Upon life’s way; Direct, protect, and feed me From day to day. Without Your grace and favor I go astray; So take my hand, O Savior, And lead the way. (“Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me” LSB 722, st.1)