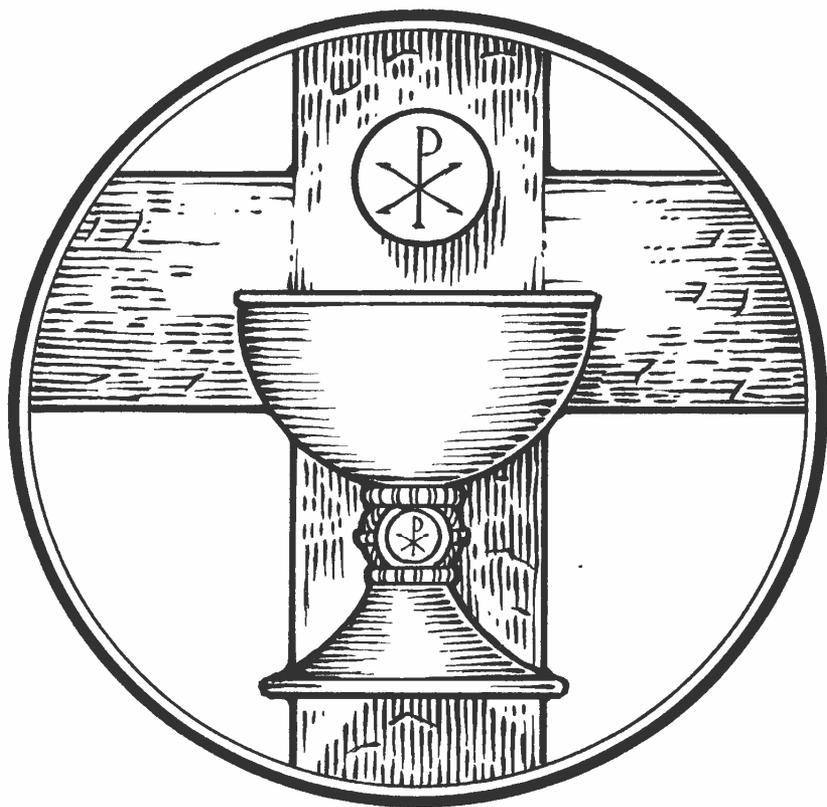


HIGHER THINGS REFLECTIONS



TRINITY 11-16
SEPTEMBER 1 - OCTOBER 12,
2019

2019 Reflections

Trinity 11 - 16

These Reflections were written by Rev. Mark Buetow, the pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church and School in McHenry, Illinois.

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A Short Form for Daily Reflection

Adapted from Luther's Small Catechism

Make the sign of the holy cross and say

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

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

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

Read the Daily Lectionary selections.

Read the Reflection for the Day.

Say the Apostles' Creed.

Pray the Lord's Prayer.

Pray one of these little prayers:

In the Morning:

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

In the 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.

In the morning go to your work with joy, singing a hymn, as the Ten Commandments, or what your devotion may suggest. If it is evening, then go to sleep promptly and cheerfully.

The 11th Sunday after Trinity

September 1, 2019

Today's Reading: Luke 18:9-14

Daily Lectionary: 1 Kings 18:1-19; Ephesians 1:1-23

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.'" (Luke 18:11)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. We all have an "inner Pharisee." Whether it's in our piety and religion, or our schoolwork, or our sports skills, or in friends and social life, it doesn't matter. We all have areas where we are convinced we're better than others and we think it's a shame they don't measure up. The great temptation is to carry that into our faith so that we somehow get the notion in our heads that we're not only better than pagans, but also our fellow Christians. We go from desiring God's mercy to desiring His congratulations. Repent of being a Pharisee!

When Jesus came, He came to be both the best of what you are not and the worst of what you are! Jesus is the one guy who can claim to be better than you at everything: loving God and loving His neighbor. But instead of saying, "I'm glad I'm not like them, Father!" He keeps the Law and lives a perfect life FOR you—to count for you.

But Jesus also takes on your sin. In fact, Jesus is so obedient to His Father, He might pray something like this: "I thank you, Father, that I am like those other men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, and tax collectors—sinners—so that I can take their judgment on me to the cross and do Your will!" Think about that! Christ was "made to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21), that we would become the righteousness of God in Him.

That's what it means when Jesus says the humble will be lifted up. You are humble. Dead in your sins. Doomed. But you have this one hope and confidence: Jesus has taken your sins away. So put to death your inner Pharisee and pray, "God, I thank you that you have made me like Jesus. Made me Your son in Holy Baptism. Lifted me up by His Body and Blood. Forgiven me all my sins." That's our cry for mercy! And Jesus and His gifts are the Lord's answer. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Praise be to Him who, Lord Most High, The fullness of the Godhead shares; And yet our human nature bears, Who came as man to bleed and die. And from His cross there flows our peace Who chose for us the path he trod, That so might sins and sorrows cease And all be reconciled to God. (Praise Be to Christ, LSB 538:3)

Monday of the 11th Week after Trinity

September 2, 2019

Today's Reading: Genesis 4:1-15

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

*Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.
(Genesis 4:4-5)*

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Cain and Abel teach us about worship. Abel worshiped God by trusting that whatever he brought would be acceptable to God by His grace. Abel knew that he was nothing apart from the Lord's promise. In fact, his name means "nothing."

Cain thought he was something. His name means something like "increase" as if he would be a big man! He worshiped God by expecting God to be happy with his offering, because Cain was making it.

Abel trusted in the Lord. Cain trusted in Cain. But when Cain realized that his worship was wrong, he didn't repent. He killed his brother instead. Ever since, those who practice a religion of "I'm better than others" have persecuted and killed those who confess nothing but "I only have God's grace in Christ." The Pharisee we heard about yesterday had a religion that goes all the way back to Cain!

When Jesus comes, He comes to be like Abel. A nothing. Despised. Hated. Neglected. Scorned. Crucified. A man of sorrows. A man murdered. But in Christ we have such a sacrifice that His blood covers the sins of all people. Abel's sins. Cain's sins. Even your sins. And the preaching of this crucified Christ is the means by which the Holy Spirit rescues sinners.

Now you learn that you are nothing. With just you and your sins, there is nothing but sin and death and a waste, a vanity, a "nothing" like Abel. But in Christ by Baptism, and Christ in you by His Supper and Word, you are then not a nothing. You are a child of God. An heir of salvation. A king and priest in a royal nation. In Christ, we who killed our brother are saved by His death. We, who thought we were so big and bad, are made truly great in Jesus by the forgiveness of sins. We, who ran away from God, are once again, for the sake of Christ, in His family. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

But Christ, the second Adam, came To bear our sin and woe and shame, To be our life, our light, our way, Our only hope, our only stay. (All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall, LSB 562:4)

Tuesday of the 11th Week after Trinity

September 3, 2019

Today's Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

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

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
(Ephesians 2:1)*

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Ever been raised from the dead? The answer, if you're baptized, is "Yes!" When we are born, we are born dead. Not stillborn, though that happens. We are born spiritually dead. Unable to do ANYTHING toward God. We can't know Him, love Him, recognize Him, honor Him, glorify Him, obey Him, or anything else. We're D-E-A-D. What can a dead person do? N-O-T-H-I-N-G!

What does Jesus do to dead people? Well, there was that little girl who died. He took her by the hand and said, "Get up." There was that young man who was being taken to be buried when Jesus stopped and touched his coffin. There was that Lazarus guy who had been in the grave for four days and was already starting to smell! With a word, Christ raised them from the dead. They were dead. Then He spoke. Then they were alive.

This is what happened to you in Baptism. You were dead. God's Word was spoken and the water was splashed on. Then you were alive. Alive in Christ. A child of God. Redeemed by the blood shed by Jesus on the cross. Alive in grace. Trespasses and sins forgiven. New life and a new creation. Marked with God's name. Clothed with Christ. A-L-I-V-E!

Of course, the reason any of this happens is that Jesus Himself was dead. Then He was alive. His death paid for sins. His resurrection throws down death's power. Christ's victory over sin and death is your victory over sin and death. By being baptized into Christ, you are baptized into the One who died and rose again Himself. Death couldn't keep Jesus down and now it can't keep you down, either, because you are in Christ.

This is important because you are probably surrounded by those who teach that in order to be saved you have to do something: give your heart to Jesus, make a decision for Christ, live a certain way. But the Bible tells you differently: You were dead. Dead people don't do anything. But Christ raised you from the dead. That's His work. His accomplishment. His gift. You are alive, not because of you, but because of Him. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

This miracle of life reborn Comes from the Lord of breath; The perfect Man from life was torn; Our life comes through Christ's death. (This Is the Spirit's Entry Now, LSB 591:2)

Wednesday of the 11th Week after Trinity

September 4, 2019

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

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. What does this mean? This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen, means, "yes, yes, it shall be so." (Small Catechism: Lord's Prayer, Conclusion)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. What a great word! "Amen!" It's from the Hebrew word that means "true" and is related to the word "believe." "Amen" is the word of faith. God makes a promise. Faith believes and trusts that promise and says "Amen" to it. Yes! It shall be so! Done deal! God said it and that makes it so!

We say "Amen" when we pray because we are confessing that we believe what Jesus told us about prayer. He told us to pray. He also promised that our Father in heaven would hear us. We don't learn to pray on our own. We don't come up with prayer out of our hearts. We pray because of Jesus, whose death on the cross takes away our sin, whose resurrection rescues us from death, and whose Word and forgiveness make it possible for us to come before our Father and ask for all things that we need.

When we end our prayers with "Amen," it's as if we're saying, "I could never ask God anything, but He told me to ask and He promised He would hear and answer." The faith that trusts this is so is a gift of the Holy Spirit, given in Baptism and nourished by preaching and the Supper.

The Lord's Prayer is a gift from Jesus. It is our prayer because it is a promise from Jesus. "Pray this way and with these words," He says, because He Himself has guaranteed by His death for sinners that our Father in heaven delights in listening to us ask and in giving us all things that we need. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Amen, that is, so shall it be. Make strong our faith in You, that we May doubt not but with trust believe That what we ask we shall receive. This in Your name and at Your Word We say, "Amen, O hear us, Lord!" (Our Father, Who from Heaven Above, LSB 766:9)

Thursday of the 11th Week after Trinity

September 5, 2019

Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-10

Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 2:19-25; 4:1-7; Ephesians 4:25-5:14

After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:6)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Many people argue that there must not be a God because they've never seen Him. But Paul tells us that after Jesus rose from the dead, He was seen by the apostles and 500 other people. If the Corinthians ever thought that Paul was crazy for preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead, there were other people they could ask! And eyewitnesses who saw Jesus have written it down in the Scriptures.

That's the problem with folks who say they've never seen God. They're looking in the wrong place! Instead of looking "up there" somewhere, we are directed to this world, this earth, and to a particular time and place. To a manger in Bethlehem, to a river called the Jordan, to a Roman governor's palace, to a cross on a hill and an empty tomb. When the Son of God comes to us, He comes in the flesh, so that we can see and know Him, and also know that in those certain places where He is, He is doing the work of saving sinners.

What about now? We can't see Jesus with our eyes. But He has told us where He is going to be for us. At the font with water and the Word. In the ministry of the preaching and teaching of God's Word. Alongside the pastor as he absolves sinners. On the altar and in you by His Body and Blood! No need to look for God "up there" somewhere. He's right where He promised to be: in His Church by His means of grace.

The great joy in all this is that these gifts don't give us a dead Jesus, but the One who conquered death and is alive and will come again. The Church, where the means of grace are given, is the place where God can be seen. You, too, are witnesses of the risen Christ, in His holy gifts. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

The gifts Christ freely gives He gives to you and me To be His Church, His bride, His chosen, saved and free! Saints blest with these rich gifts Are children who proclaim That they were won by Christ And cling to His strong name. (The Gifts Christ Freely Gives, LSB 602:1)

Friday of the 11th Week after Trinity

September 6, 2019

Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 4:8-22, 32-37; Ephesians 5:15-33

When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord. Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. (2 Kings 4:32-35)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God sent Elisha to raise the child from death. Raised from the dead, this child was a sign of God's abundant life-giving grace. But what about our death? Where's God's grace for us? When Jesus Himself rose from the dead that same life-giving gift was declared to be for all of us: one death for everybody in the whole world.

Our death is the only thing the world can't take away from us. The people, places, memories, and possessions in which our hearts find their rest can be removed. But when our hearts rest in God's promise that works even into our death, we can't lose. The amazing graciousness of God that we will never lack is the one thing no one will ever want to beg, borrow, or steal from us and the one thing any of us will ever need. It's our death.

By Jesus' death in our name, and by our watery death in His Name, we have overcome the world. In God's baptismal promise all of us who are dead in sin can rest, not in our heart's desires that fade, wither, and wear out over time, but in the grace of God that works entirely by raising the dead. No uncertainties. No anxiety. Just God's abundant, unbreakable promise that, "We were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His" (Romans 6:3-5). In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Death you cannot end my gladness; I am baptized into Christ! When I die, I leave all sadness To inherit paradise! Though I lie in dust and ashes Faith's assurance brightly flashes: Baptism has the strength divine To make life immortal mine. (God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It, LSB 594:4)

Saturday of the 11th Week after Trinity

September 7, 2019

Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 4:48-5:8; Ephesians 6:1-24

*Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Make haste to help me, O LORD!
(Psalm 70:1 from the Introit for Trinity 12)*

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Hurry up! We love fast. We want things now. “No waiting on this register!” When the line is long for the roller coaster or there’s not a checkout lane with less than three full carts, we get impatient! The psalmist cries out for God to “make haste”! Hurry up, Lord! But we NEED the Lord to hurry. Oh, we may not like it, but a long wait to order a cheeseburger is not the end of the world. On the other hand, our enemies—the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh—are always against us. We need help against them right away!

Before you even asked, before you even knew, before you were even born, Christ came and answered the psalmist’s prayer. He subjected Himself to the cruelty and suffering of evil men, even giving up His Father’s help for your sake. For your sake He endured the hours of agony on Calvary to rescue you from sin and death.

Make haste to help me, O Lord! That’s the prayer we pray when we sing Matins and Vespers. And while it may not be the opening versicles of the Divine Service, nevertheless it’s a prayer that is answered again tomorrow. We may want church to be over faster than it is, but consider the haste with which the Lord moves things right along tomorrow. He’ll start by reminding you of your baptismal name, absolving your sins, filling your ears with His Word and preaching and then feeding you Christ’s Body and Blood. All within in an hour or so!

That’s haste. That’s salvation delivered from a God who doesn’t wait around, but comes to save you and makes sure you have His saving gifts In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

My God desires the soul's salvation; My soul He, too, desires to save. Therefore with Christian resignation All earthly troubles will I brave. His will be done eternally: What pleases God, that pleases me. (I Leave All Things to God's Direction, LSB 719:3)

The 12th Sunday after Trinity

September 8, 2019

Today's Reading: Mark 7:31-37

Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 5:9-27; Philippians 1:1-20

And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. (Mark 7:33)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Gross! Spitting. Touching tongues. Putting your fingers in somebody else's ears! It doesn't sound very pleasant. But Jesus doesn't do squeamish. He takes this deaf man aside, spits, touches his tongue and sticks his fingers in His ears. What's going on? What saves this man? He's got the Word of God—literally, Jesus—in his ears and on his tongue!

His problem is our problem. Even if we can hear, we are deaf to God's Word. Even if we can talk, we use our mouths to curse instead of bless, to say worthless things instead of speaking God's Word. So how is this man saved? How are we saved? By the Word of God going into our ears and the Word of God going onto our tongues.

Jesus isn't squeamish about coming amongst us sinners. In the beginning, the Lord Himself came down and made man out of mud. In the fullness of time, He sent His Son, who was not afraid to actually take on a human nature, become a man, be born, suffer, die, and rise for your sins. Jesus gets in the mud pit with us sinners to be like us, to carry our sins, and to suffer and die for them.

Now He does the same thing to you to rescue you from spiritual blindness and dumbness. He puts the Word in your ears in the preaching and teaching of the Gospel and puts the Word on your tongue, His own true Body and Blood, given for you to eat and drink. And not with spit now, but with baptismal water, the Lord gives you Himself and rescues you from sin and death.

We suffer the very same problem as this poor man: We are deaf and dumb, unable to hear God's Word and speak and sing His praises. But the Lord has opened your ears and loosed your tongue by His saving gifts so that now you can rejoice to hear Christ and confess Him, to hear the Good News that your sins are forgiven and to praise Him with your tongue. He has done all things well for you! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and merciful God, whose gift it is that Your faithful possess all things pertaining to faith and life, we implore You that we may so faithfully cling to Your promises in this life that we fail not finally to attain to Your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Trinity 12)

Monday of the 12th Week after Trinity

September 9, 2019

Today's Reading: Isaiah 29:17-24

Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 6:1-23; Philippians 1:21-2:11

The humble also shall increase their joy in the LORD, And the poor among men shall rejoice In the Holy One of Israel. (Isaiah 29:19)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Most religious people aren't very humble. Most religious people think they're pretty good people because, after all, they've got God figured out and they know that they do what He wants. These are the people who always seem to think that because they go to church and know some stuff about religion, they're better than others. How about you? Do you ever think that way? Of course you do. It's easy to think you're better than that kid over there who doesn't go to church, but instead just gets into trouble all the time.

Isaiah doesn't say the proud and righteous will rejoice in the Holy One. He says the humble will. The Holy One of Israel is Jesus. Jesus comes not to be proud and haughty. He could. He's the Son of God, after all. If anyone has a reason to look down on others, it should be Him. But instead He humbles Himself. He is born of poor parents. He comes to serve and to give His life and die on the cross to take away our sins. Jesus is our Savior by being our servant. All true humility there.

Therefore, abandon your pride and thinking you're "all that" just because you are a Christian. Rather, learn true repentance again, which says, "I really am an awful sinner and deserve nothing from God. Yet by Christ's death and resurrection, He rescues me and saves me." When you are nothing but a low down, dirty, rotten sinner, then your joy will increase as you see what sort of a Savior you have. The more sins you've got, the bigger a Savior Jesus is!

So rejoice in the Holy One of Israel! He saves you not because of you, but because that's what He does. His water, Word, Body and Blood are gifts so humble, and yet so powerful, that they rescue you from sin, death, devil, hell, and even your pride! The Holy One of Israel, Jesus Christ your Lord, came to save you. Having heard that with your open ears, now let your tongue loose to rejoice and sing! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Not unto us, not unto us be glory, Lord; Not unto us but to Your name be praise; Not unto us but to Your name all honor be giv'n For matchless mercy, forgiveness, and grace. (Not unto Us, LSB 558:1)

Tuesday of the 12th Week after Trinity

September 10, 2019

Today's Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:4-11

Daily Lectionary: 2 Kings 9:1-13; 10:18-29; Philippians 2:12-30

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God. (2 Corinthians 3:5)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. What makes you sufficient to pass your test? Did you study hard enough? Did you review enough flashcards? Take enough notes? Read and highlight enough in the textbook? What makes you sufficient to play on the team? Have you worked out enough? Practiced enough? Drilled enough? When it comes to the things of this world, hard work and practice make us sufficient and ready for the task.

But when it comes to the things of faith and eternal life, we'll never be sufficient. Have you loved God with your whole heart? Really? Except for despising His Word and not praying. Do you really love others as yourself? When there's something in return, perhaps. If we are to be sufficient before God, we need to measure up to the perfection of the Law. Have you kept all the Ten Commandments on your own? That will never happen.

We need a sufficiency not from ourselves and not inside of us. That's Jesus. His perfect life and His atoning death for your sins mean that your sufficiency is from Him. Baptism, Word, Body and Blood—all gifts of Jesus—mean that you have all you need. It's sufficient. It's enough. It's more than you need!

St. Paul knew that he could not be a pastor on his own. He didn't have the wisdom and strength and all the other things people think would make a good preacher. Yet He had Christ. His sufficiency was from God. So is yours. Whenever you think you don't have much to offer God, rejoice! That's true! But what the Lord offers you is Himself and that is not only sufficient, but way more than enough for whatever you'll need in this life and the life to come. Jesus is sufficient for you. He is everything. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Thy righteousness, O Christ, Alone can cover me; No righteousness avails Save that which is of Thee. To whom save Thee, Who canst alone for sin atone, Lord, shall I flee? (Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ, LSB 565:5)

Wednesday of the 12th Week after Trinity

September 11, 2019

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

[A bishop must...] hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. (Small Catechism: The Table of Duties: To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. In the Small Catechism, you'll find some pages called "The Table of Duties." This is a set of Scripture passages that describes the responsibilities that the Lord gives to people in various callings. The first entry is for pastors. Pastors are supposed to be faithful, to use sound teaching, to comfort you and encourage you, while at the same time shutting down those who contradict God's Word.

You are probably not a pastor, so what good are these words to you? They are life! Christ forgives your sins and makes you a Christian through the Word and Sacraments your pastor administers. It is by His Word, given through your pastor, that the Holy Spirit gives you life, gives you faith, and saves you. It is the message of the cross—Jesus crucified for your sins—that your pastor preaches, by which the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Church on earth.

The devil desires only that no one would believe in Christ, trust in His forgiveness, and have peace. So he stirs up all kinds of false doctrine, fake preachers, and crazy ideas that sound almost Christian, but ultimately are not. That's why the Lord gives you a pastor: to defend you and protect you from any teaching that would lead you astray and tear you away from Christ!

What joy that the Lord delivers His salvation to you in the means of grace, which your pastor gives out. What joy that the salvation won for you by Christ the crucified is bestowed upon you through this pastor. And what a comfort and relief that your pastor works hard, by God's grace, to protect you from what is false and deadly. The Table of Duties teaches us what a pastor should do. And we learn, as is always the case with Jesus, that this is all given and done for you! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit, On Your servant now, we pray; Let him prove a faithful shepherd That no lamb be led astray. Your pure teaching to proclaim, To extol Your holy name, And to feed Your lambs, dear Savior, Make his aim and sole endeavor. (Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit, LSB 681:1)

Thursday of the 12th Week after Trinity

September 12, 2019

Today's Reading: Romans 10:9-17

Daily Lectionary: 2 Chronicles 31:1-21; Philippians 4:1-23

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:14)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. You can't be a Christian without a pastor. That's right. That's what St. Paul says. How can you believe in Christ if He is not preached to you? Many of your friends may go to churches where the exact opposite is taught. "Faith is something personal that you discover on your own. It's between you and Jesus."

But that's not how the Lord does things. He doesn't give you life by spawning you in a forest and letting you grow up on your own. He gives you parents who provide for you. He doesn't shower money on you out of the sky. He gives you a job and a boss so that you have what you need .

Just so, Christ does not expect us to fend for ourselves, figure Him out on our own and get some faith that way. No, He gives us a pastor, whose job is to preach and teach God's Word. To put God's Word into your ears. To baptize you and absolve you and feed you with Christ's Body and Blood. You can't get those things for yourself. The Lord provides them for you through the man He has called to give those gifts to you.

This is for your comfort. When your sins trouble you, that pastor whom Jesus has called will remind you of your Savior's death on the cross, which takes away your sins. When you are troubled and need guidance, more than just "advice" the world would give, your pastor is there to counsel you and teach you what the Lord's Word says, to strengthen you against the devil and your enemies. Indeed, your pastor, like your parents who gave you life and take care of you, is given to you by God to give you eternal life by giving you Jesus.

Most churches don't make much of preachers. But preachers are the means by which the Lord comes to us with His gifts. They aren't anything in themselves, but as they deliver Jesus faithfully and give out His forgiveness, pastors are essential—a gift from God for our salvation. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

The words which absolution give Are His who died that we might live; The minister whom Christ has sent Is but His humble instrument. ("As Surely as I Live," God Said, LSB 614:5)

Friday of the 12th Week after Trinity

September 13, 2019

Daily Lectionary: 2 Chronicles 32:1-22; Colossians 1:1-23

Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven. And the Lord sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword. So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and he provided for them on every side. (2 Chronicles 32:20-22)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. We are all the more blessed on earth and in heaven when we are weak and suffer for God's sake. In fact, we are to consider weakness and suffering as reason to praise and thank God. It's the highest blessing to suffer in weakness for God's sake. As Christ Himself says in Matthew 5:11-12, "Blessed are you when men will insult you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Listen, too, to the words of the prophet Isaiah (51:7), who urges us not to be terrified by the anger and threats of men, but to trust in God: "Do not fear the insults of men, neither be dismayed when they revile you."

Don't be upset then by the strength and power of men. You are blessed and satisfied by God. What is the power of all men compared to this God who suffered, died, was buried, went to hell, and rose from death FOR YOU? If they couldn't bury our God what can they do to us? This is why their threats, angry looks, and insults are harmless. We have Jesus, our Immanuel, the God-who-is-with-us. Therefore, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7), today and forever. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

The Lord my life arranges; Who can His work destroy? In His good time He changes All sorrow into joy. So let me then be still: My body, soul, and spirit His tender care inherit According to His will. (From God Can Nothing Move Me, LSB 713:3)

Holy Cross Day

September 14, 2019

Today's Reading: John 12:20-33

Daily Lectionary: 2 Chronicles 33:1-25; Colossians 1:24-2:7

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."
(John 12:24)*

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The Son of God came to die. Never forget that. Jesus did lots of amazing things, such as healing the blind and deaf and sick, walking on water, feeding thousands with just a little food, raising the dead, and so on. But the thing He came to do most was to give His life on the cross for sinners.

As He approached the day of His suffering and death, some people came along who wanted to meet Him. But He told His disciples that His job was not to preach and teach to everybody. He did do that, but not at this time. Now it was no longer time for people to meet and greet Jesus. Now it was time for Him to go and suffer and take away the sins of the world by His death.

So what about those Greeks who wanted to meet Jesus? Were they out of luck? Too bad they didn't come earlier or come with a backstage pass! No, they would meet Jesus, but now it would be in His Church, where His saving death and death-conquering resurrection were preached as the basis for repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus came to accomplish our salvation and He did that. But He did not come to deliver it. That work is done by Jesus along with His preachers in His Church to the ends of the earth. Jesus died for you. But because you haven't seen Him with your eyes it doesn't mean that it's not for you! On the contrary, that salvation is entirely yours by the waters of Holy Baptism, the preaching of the Word and the Supper of His Body and Blood.

The cross is the center of our faith, not in itself, but because what happened upon it is our salvation. Its fruits flow forth, in the blood and water from Jesus' side, to the font and cup which save you. And that death of Jesus, on a cross, means that much grain grows up. He dies on the cross and now you have life! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

*Ev'ry wound that pains or grieves me
By Your wounds, Lord is made whole;
When I'm faint, Your cross revives me,
Granting new life to my soul.
Yes, Your comfort renders sweet
Ev'ry bitter cup I meet;
For Your all atoning passion
Has procured my soul's salvation.
(Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing, LSB 421:4)*

Sunday of the 13th Week after Trinity

September 15, 2019

Today's Reading: Luke 10:23-37

Daily Lectionary: 2 Chronicles 34:1-4, 8-11, 14-33; Colossians 2:8-23

Then [Jesus] turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it." (Luke 10:23-24)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. You have seen and heard more than Adam or Noah or Abraham or David or even John the Baptist ever did. All of those Old Testament saints believed in the Savior who was going to come someday. They believed in Him, but never saw Him. Even John, whom we heard about yesterday, was denied the glorious witness of the risen Jesus.

But not you. You know what has happened. You know what they knew, but did not get to see fulfilled—that the Son of God became man and was born of the Virgin Mary, that He suffered, was crucified, died and was buried, and rose again the Third Day. There is great joy in living in the time when, by the witness of the New Testament, we can see the promises of God fulfilled in Christ.

So are you blessed? Do you feel special? Or is all that Jesus stuff not such a big deal? At least not as exciting as your team's latest victory? That party coming up at your friend's? That late night that made you sleep in, instead of getting up for church? The truth is, we have been blessed to see what kings and prophets didn't and often don't give it a second thought, like we're flipping past it as we race through the channels on TV.

Repent. Consider what it means that you've seen God's plan unfold in Jesus Christ. And it is precisely what He has done for you that rescues you from such disinterest and every other sin. It is the blood of Christ sprinkled on you in Baptism and drunk at the altar from the cup that rescues and forgives you for such indifference. It is the very Word of God which forgives your sins and joins you to the Church of which you and all Christians and Old Testament saints are a part—the Body of Christ. Rejoice, dear Christian, not that you are more special than they are, but that you have seen what they did not and that all together we are the people of God in and through Jesus Christ. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

The God of Abr'ham praise, Whose all sufficient grace Shall guide me all my pilgrim days In all my ways. He deigns to call me friend; He calls Himself my God. And He shall save me to the end Through Jesus' blood. (The God of Abraham Praise, LSB 798:3)

Monday of the 13th Week after Trinity

September 16, 2019

Today's Reading: 2 Chronicles 28:8-15

Daily Lectionary: 2 Chronicles 35:1-7, 16-25; Colossians 3:1-25

Then the men who were designated by name rose up and took the captives, and from the spoil they clothed all who were naked among them, dressed them and gave them sandals, gave them food and drink, and anointed them; and they let all the feeble ones ride on donkeys. So they brought them to their brethren at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria. (2 Chronicles 28:15)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Here are the original Good Samaritans. They were from Samaria and helped these poor captives by taking care of them after their captors abandoned them. You were born abandoned. The devil likes to fool your sinful flesh into believing that he's got all the answers, but then he slips away and leaves you on your own. Just so, all the false gods we make for ourselves leave us right when we need help the most. The things of this world don't take care of us. They give us up for dead.

Then the Lord finds you. He sends His Son, who dies for your sins, takes you and clothes you in righteousness and makes you His own. Where the devil, the world, and even our own sinful flesh would leave us for dead and abandon us, it is the Lord who rescues us and takes care of us like nothing and no one else.

Think of all the things that happened to these poor captives to help them, just as Jesus has done for you. They were clothed and anointed. You were clothed with Christ and anointed in your Baptism. They were given sandals; you have been given the Gospel which is the "sandals of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). They were given food and drink. You eat and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus. They were brought to their brethren at that city. You have been brought into the Holy Christian Church.

It is the Lord who comes and takes care of us—takes care of you. He will not abandon or forsake you. He will never leave you. And He will not let the enemies of this world destroy you. No, your Lord saves you. Rescues you. His death and resurrection and the forgiveness He won, delivered in His holy gifts, mean that you who were once abandoned captives in this world are now citizens of His everlasting kingdom. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

I walk with Jesus all the way, His guidance never fails me; Within His wounds I find a stay When Satan's pow'r assails me; And by His footsteps led, My path I safely tread. No evil leads my soul astray; I walk with Jesus all the way. (I Walk in Danger All the Way, LSB 716:5)

Tuesday of the 13th Week after Trinity

September 17, 2019

Today's Reading: Galatians 3:15-22

Daily Lectionary: 2 Chronicles 36:1-23; Colossians 4:1-18

And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. (Galatians 3:17)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. So, you're a Christian because Jesus died for you and saved you. But how do you stay a Christian? There are many preachers out there who would tell you that it is Jesus who saves you, but then you have to start living a good life to be and remain a Christian. It's like they start with Jesus but end up with you and what you have to do.

St. Paul says that we are saved because of a promise—a promise made to Abraham that his offspring (Jesus, way down the road) would be the Savior. That promise was made long before the Ten Commandments were given. But some people figured that once the Ten Commandments were given, that was how you got right with God. Paul tells the Galatians that it's not that way at all! God didn't start with a promise and end up by telling you to do something you couldn't do.

So, why did He give the Ten Commandments? To put you under judgment. To show you your sin and your need for a Savior. The Commandments teach us that in and of ourselves we are doomed. But Christ kept the Commandments. He kept them perfectly and then paid the price for our breaking them. He lived our life and died our death. On the cross He suffered our punishment and took away all our sins.

Now, as you struggle against sin, as you do the hard work of learning to love God and your neighbor, don't be fooled that such effort is how you stay a Christian. In fact, when you fail at those things, you especially need to know that what saves you, what forgives you, what makes you right with God and makes you a Christian, is what the Lord has done for you and promised you. That's the promise of your Baptism which says you are His child. It's the promise of Absolution in which He declares you not guilty. It's His promise in His Supper to live in you and raise you up in the Last Day.

You are saved by Christ. You are kept in the faith by Christ. His Word. His gifts. All Jesus for you. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

It is the pow'r of God to save From sin and Satan and the grave; It works the faith which firmly clings To all the treasures which it brings. (The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace, LSB 580:4)

Wednesday of the 13th Week after Trinity

September 18, 2019

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

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves (Small Catechism: The Table of Duties: What Hearers Owe Their Pastors).

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Have you thanked your pastor lately? The Lord gives you lots of people in your life for various reasons. He gives you parents to raise you and provide for you, teachers to educate you and prepare you for college and work, and friends to support you and help you out. He gives you pastors to save you. A pastor to baptize you. A pastor to hear your confession and remind you that God won't disown you because of your sins. A pastor to preach and teach God's Word to you so that you will know Christ and His salvation. A pastor to give you Jesus' Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins. Without your pastor, how would you have these gifts and blessings?

Notice, though, that St. Paul says to esteem them "for their work's sake." Your pastor may not be the coolest guy you know. He may not be the most personable or the most patient. He may not even be the best speaker you know. But those things aren't the big deal. The big deal is your pastor's work, which is to deliver Christ and His gifts to you.

Christ has accomplished your salvation. He's done it. Finished it. He's lived and suffered and died and rose. Now all that remains is for you to receive that salvation, for Jesus' forgiveness to be given to you. For that job, the Lord calls your pastor. Think of your pastor as that servant of Christ who will regularly remind you Christ has indeed forgiven your sins and made you a child of God. The Lord gives you a pastor, so that you will always be sure of what Christ has done for you. Do your sins trouble you? Did someone make fun of your faith? Do you need guidance on how to faithfully serve your neighbor? Talk to your pastor. He is the one the Lord has given you so that you will always be sure of God's grace and mercy in all things. And tell your pastor thank you—not for being himself but for being a servant of Jesus who gives to you the saving gifts of Christ. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Make them apostles, heralds of Your cross; Forth let them go to tell the world of grace. Inspired by You, may they count all but loss And stand at last with joy before Your face. (God of the Prophets, Bless the Prophets' Sons, LSB 682:5)

Thursday of the 13th Week after Trinity

September 19, 2019

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

Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?" (Nehemiah 4:1-2)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Under the storm of Sanballat's anger and insults there's a hidden, strange teaching that grows in the Israelites that quietly shapes a different spirit—a different obedience and way of life. They build on the foundation of God's promises, which is a temple of the Holy Spirit that never wears out.

In the same way, St. Paul warns against using wood, hay, and stubble to build the Church of God. These materials are flammable. They are fuel in the fire of judgment on the day of the Lord. The smallest piece of wood will ignite. Those who build on the Church's foundation with these materials will escape with their lives, but their work will be consumed. Paul, master-builder that he is, suggests "gold, silver [and] precious stones"—very poor fuel for fire—as the building materials. There's a simplicity about these materials, just as there's a simplicity in the way the Church is built on the foundation of God's Name and Word: Jesus Christ.

It's the simplicity of the new life by the Spirit in the water and Word of Baptism, of nurturing the life of faith and love on the life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus, of reordering the relationship of the sinner to God by the Word of forgiveness of sins spoken into the ear from the mouth of another. The simplicity of the Lord's teaching is the handing of His Word from mouth to ear in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Our Father. The way of God's Word is the shape and content of the godly, obedient life: repentance, faith, holiness. And so we are shaped by a different Spirit, a different obedience and way of life that is built on the Christ who promised, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And the Third Day, He rose from the dead. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

We are God's house of living stones, Built for His own habitation. He through baptismal grace us owns Heirs of His wondrous salvation. Were we but two His name to tell, Yet He would deign with us to dwell With all His grace and His favor. (Built on the Rock, LSB 645:3)

Friday of the 13th Week after Trinity

September 20, 2019

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

And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us." (Nehemiah 4:19-20)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Nehemiah and his people rebuilt Jerusalem with one hand on their swords and the other on their tools. They had to answer to God about how they used their swords. The man who takes the sword steps into the way of the sword. In that way things are settled by the sword. But this is not ultimately God's way, not the Calvary way. Jesus had a far different and greater battle and victory before Him. In the battle to come, Jesus would have no need of a sword. To use a sword would turn His mission into something of which there is already enough in this world.

God's kingdom comes through His victories of love. God uses force only where love fails. Jesus came to suffer and die FOR YOUR SINS—to drink the cup of God's wrath toward sin FOR YOU. When you hear that Jesus wrestled to hold Himself to the will of God, it was love that held Him to it. Loving God and loving you, Jesus concluded, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus was there for God. He was there FOR YOU. The victory of answering for your sins according to the plan of God was the victory of Jesus. This is the God who was prepared to suffer your hell FOR YOU.

When we use force, we acknowledge that love has failed. To build up, to prop up, to carry, and to suffer for each other is the work of love. All our good hangs on Jesus' going on to Calvary. When we draw our swords this spells defeat. When we raise our fists against each other this spells defeat. When we whip each other with our tongues this spells defeat. Where a man is crushed, a congregation divided, a church killed, love has failed. Jesus' way is the way of love, the way through God's wrath and suffering and death and hell to be YOUR SAVIOR. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

How deep the love of Christ, Descending to a cross! He bears within His wounded hands All human pain and loss. (How Wide the Love of Christ, LSB 535:4)

St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

September 21, 2019

Today's Reading: Matthew 9:9-13

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

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." (Matthew 9:11-12)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Jesus not only ate with sinners and tax collectors, He called one of those tax collectors to be an apostle! That was Matthew. The Pharisees just couldn't see how the Lord could have anything to do with people who are so sinful. How about you? Are there people you would never associate with because you figure they are too weird, unpopular, or sinful? What about that little part of you that tells you that you must be better than THOSE sorts of people?

To such sinners and Pharisees as us, the apostle Matthew preaches Christ. He reminds us of Jesus' words that He didn't come to save healthy people but sick people, not righteous people but sinners. If you're righteous, if you're better than others, odds are you don't need a Savior. Good luck on your own!

But to those who are sinners, who know they judge others, who don't love God more than anything else, who don't love others more than themselves—to such sinners Jesus came to be nailed to the cross. Jesus calls a man whose job was to legally rob people of their income to instead be a preacher and tell people that Christ has paid the debt of sin that they owed. The Lord collected, but He collected from Christ, His only begotten Son, who was crucified to pay the price of our sins.

Now Matthew, who was formerly the guy who said, "Pay what you owe!" is now the apostle who says "What you owe has been paid!" And so it is from your pastor, a sinner who has been called by Christ to preach the Good News to you: Your sins are forgiven. You are baptized. Christ's Body and Blood are given for you.

We celebrate Matthew because he is an example of a sinner whom the Lord saved, because he was the evangelist who wrote down this Good News of what Jesus did for you, and because he is an apostle who proclaimed that Good News to the world. It's the same Good News that tells you that Jesus has come for you and healed you from your sin. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Praise, Lord, for him whose Gospel Your human life declared, Who, worldly gain forsaking, Your path of suffering shared. From all unrighteous mammon, O raise our eyes anew That we In our vocation May rise and follow You. (By All Your Saints in Warfare, LSB 518:25)

The 14th Sunday after Trinity

September 22, 2019

Today's Reading: Luke 17:11-19

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

*And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."
(Luke 17:19)*

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. "Your faith has made you well." What made that poor leper better? Is it because he believed really hard? Is it because he was really sincere in what he believed? Was he saved because he really showed Jesus his good intentions? None of the above!

If we are going to understand what the Bible means by "faith" then we always have to know what it is that faith trusts in and depends upon. If by "faith" we mean this man's trust in himself then something is wrong, because he can't save himself. But, if by "faith" the Bible means "Jesus," then we see what true faith really is. In fact, you can test this by substituting "Jesus" for "faith" when you read the Scriptures. Just try it: Jesus says, "Go your way, your Jesus has made you well." Well, yeah, because it's Jesus, after all, who spoke the Word and cured this man's leprosy.

When we talk about faith, that's what we mean—clinging to and trusting in Jesus, because of what He has done. He has become man for you. He has lived a perfect life for you. He suffered and died on the cross for you. He rose from the dead for you. He washed you at the font, absolved you by your pastor, filled your ears with His Word and feeds you with His own Body and Blood. That's all the stuff that Jesus does.

Faith just means to trust in Jesus. To say, "Jesus died for my sins" or "my Baptism saves me" IS to have faith. That's because faith doesn't talk about itself. It talks about what it believes in: Jesus and all that He's done for us.

And that faith itself, that having Jesus, is itself a gift of God by His Word and the Holy Spirit. To say "I believe that Jesus died for my sins" isn't YOU taking credit for something. That's the confession of faith the Holy Spirit has given to you. Even your faith is a gift! So go in peace. Your faith, your Jesus, has made you well. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Keep, we implore You, O Lord, Your Church with Your perpetual mercy; and because the frailty of mankind without You cannot but fall, keep us ever by Your help from all things hurtful and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Trinity 14)

Monday of the 14th Week after Trinity

September 23, 2019

Today's Reading: Proverbs 4:10-23

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

But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. (Proverbs 4:18)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Rainbows and sunbeams! Butterflies and chirping birds! Just skip down the path of righteousness toward that glowing sunset of joy! Sounds crazy. Sounds like something out of "The Wizard of Oz." But the Word of God says the path of the just, the righteous, is like a shining sun. What does the sun do? It gives light and heat and life.

The "path of the just" is not your life of good behavior. Should you work to avoid temptation and sin? Of course. Is that what makes you a Christian? No. So what is this path and how do you know you are on it?

Christians have Jesus' words, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." Jesus is the path. He is the shining sun that lights our way. What does that mean? He walks and we follow? What would Jesus do? Do the same thing and you're on the path? Still not right.

Jesus' being the path means He is the way we are saved. His death for our sins is the bright and shining light that drives away the darkness of the devil, world, and sinful flesh. His being lifted up on the cross is the bright light that pierces the darkness of our sin and death and brings us to eternal life.

Wherever Christ is—in Baptism, His Word, His Supper—there darkness is destroyed and light shines. In this dark world, Christ and His gifts are themselves the lighted path along which we travel. Safe in Him, we move on to that perfect day when He will come in all His glory and wipe out our sin once and for all. Until then, there is no darkness for God's people because they are in Christ, and He is their light. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

You are the way; through You alone Can we the Father find; In you, O Christ, has God revealed His heart and will and mind. (You Are the Way; through You Alone, LSB 526:1)

Tuesday of the 14th Week after Trinity

September 24, 2019

Today's Reading: Galatians 5:16-24

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

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (Galatians 5:17-18).

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The Spirit and the sinful flesh are fighting. Ya think?! You know that you aren't supposed to yell at your parents and disobey them, but you do. You know that you are supposed to keep your thoughts pure, but you still look at things you shouldn't. You know you should control your temper, but you still lash out. You know that you are supposed to speak well of others, but it's just so easy to spread that latest story you heard about someone. You KNOW what the right thing is, so why don't you do it? Because the sinful flesh is at war with the Spirit.

But there's more. When you know what you should do and you don't do it, when you neglect to do what you should, the guilt and shame come crashing down on you. Maybe you are good at hiding it. But they are there, whispering, "Why do you bother calling yourself a Christian?" It's not just that you sin when you know you shouldn't; it's that you are pressed down by the guilt of that sin. Why? Because the sinful flesh is at war with the Spirit.

But the Spirit wins because the Spirit by the Gospel has rescued you from being under the Law. The Law can't condemn you any more because Christ died for you. Whatever commandment you break, that sin has been laid upon Jesus. It's His sin now. He suffered for it. He bled and died on the cross for it. You are set free.

How does the Spirit fight back against your sinful flesh? By your Baptism in which the promise that you are God's child cannot be broken. By Absolution, which forgives you and robs the devil of any evidence against you. By the Word, which is preached through which the Spirit works repentance and faith and a new life with good fruits in you. By the Supper, in which Christ lives in you so that if your sinful flesh wants to destroy you, it has to first get through the Son of God! Your sinful flesh fights the Spirit in you. But the Spirit wins, because He brings you Christ, who has conquered sin and death. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

*God would not have the sinner die; His Son with saving grace is nigh;
His Spirit in the Word declares How we in Christ are heaven's heirs.
(God Loved the World So That He Gave, LSB 571:3)*

Wednesday of the 14th Week after Trinity

September 25, 2019

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

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. (Small Catechism: The Table of Duties: Of Civil Government)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. You know what this command to respect the government is all about. It's posted everywhere you drive, on black and white signs with big numbers! You know, the numbers that are lower than the needle on your speedometer shows? As you grow older, the things that politicians and government officials do will become more important. When you pay taxes (and you already do if you have a job), you will realize that the government is not always something to be talked about with a smile.

Yet government, too, is a gift from God. Who would you call for help if there were no police or fire department? Who would you trust to make sure the restaurant you're eating at is clean enough if there were no government? Who would fight for us when our nation is attacked?

If there were no government, who would have put Jesus to death? Wait a minute. Isn't that an example of the abuse of government? Pontius Pilate failed to set an innocent man free. Or did he? Jesus was perfect. He had no sins. Yet He was not innocent. He was guilty. Guilty of all your sins. Guilty of the sin with which you are born and the sins which you have committed. And Jesus Himself, the Son of God, submits Himself to the governing authorities. No objection. No appeal. No voting that bum Pontius Pilate out of office. The governor sentences Jesus to death and to death He goes. For you. For sinners.

Government is not perfect but it is a gift from God. We are citizens of the Lord's "country" by virtue of our Baptism. You are also a citizen of an earthly country, given the responsibility of loving and serving your neighbor by not breaking the law and by being a good citizen. If you're not able to vote yet, you will be soon. That is your opportunity to put into office people who will do things to benefit and serve others. That's a gift for this life from the Lord who will still be king when all earthly nations have passed away! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

God bless our native land; Firm may she ever stand Through storm and night. When the wild tempests rave, Ruler of wind and wave, Do Thou our country save By Thy great might. (God Bless Our Native Land, LSB 965:1)

Thursday of the 14th Week after Trinity

September 26, 2019

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

“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 3:1)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The prophet’s words are proven true 40 days after Jesus’ birth. His parents brought him into the temple for the Service of Presentation. Simeon takes the baby into his arms and says about Him, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which will be spoken against...that thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:34-35).

Jesus, Simeon says, is a sign to whom people will show whether they receive or reject God’s Word. Simeon received God’s Word, too. He would not die until he saw the Savior. Each day Simeon grew older, but he clung to God’s promise. When Mary’s baby, the sign, came to the temple, Simeon rejoiced. The messages contained in that sign were “Now you can go in peace,” and, “this is the Savior.” A baby—this poor husband and wife’s baby—is the sign of Simeon’s peace and salvation. Simeon looked at his life and his death through this sign and departed in peace.

Simeon embraced the Savior in the sign of the baby that brought him his peace and salvation. We embrace the Savior, too, in the signs of earthly words, water, bread and wine, where God comes close to us with His peace and salvation. This sign means death and new life—death to our telling God who He must be for us. It means our rising to new life with Christ, to share His life so closely that nobody and nothing can destroy it.

All this we remember when we read Malachi’s prophecy, and rejoice in when we sing the Song of Simeon after we receive the Sacrament of the Altar. We rejoice in the Savior in whom we have our falling and rising. Our strength and preservation. Our peace and our salvation. It is Christ Jesus, “a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.” In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Lord, bid Your servant go in peace, Your word is now fulfilled. These eyes have seen salvation’s dawn, This child so long foretold. (Lord, Bid Your Servant God in Peace, LSB 937:1)

Friday of the 14th Week after Trinity

September 27, 2019

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

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 4:1-3)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The prophet Malachi takes the description of the sun from Genesis 1 and uses it to point to the work of Jesus, the “Sun of Righteousness.” Malachi writes that “...for you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise, and salvation under His wings,” (which are God’s Word and Sacraments), “and you will go out and come in, leaping like fatted calves.” In Luke’s Gospel, Zechariah calls the Lord Jesus, “the rising from on high” (Luke 1:78). In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus “shines like the sun” (Matthew 17:2). Also, in Revelation 1:16, Jesus is the true Sun of Righteousness. And in Revelation 22:5 we read that the heavenly city of Jerusalem will need no sun or moon to shine, because the glory of the Lord will be her lamp. The Lamb of God will be her light.

Whenever the sun rises and sets, turn your thoughts to Jesus and say, “Just as I could not see the sun if it didn’t reveal itself to me by its light, I would not be able to know You if You didn’t reveal Yourself to me by the light of Your Word.” The Sun scatters clouds and waters. The Sun begins and ends the day. The Sun fills gardens with flowers, plants, and herbs. The Sun makes the earth fertile. The Sun is the light of the world. The Sun of Righteousness is greater than all the angels in heaven. He is greater than all creation. He is true God and true man. He is greater than all the prophets and His benefits are greater than you can ever dream of. He will not pass over your need. The Sun of Righteousness has risen and salvation is under His wings! That’s the Gospel. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O Morning Star, how fair and bright! You shine with God’s own truth and light, Aglow with grace and mercy! Of Jacob’s race, King David’s son, Our Lord and master, You have won Our hearts to serve You only! Lowly, holy! Great and glorious, All victorious, Rich in blessing! Rule and might o’er all possessing! (O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright, LSB 395:1)

Saturday of the 14th Week after Trinity

September 28, 2019

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

*Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me; For I am poor and needy.
Preserve my life, for I am holy; You are my God; Save Your servant who
trusts in You! (Psalm 86:1-2 from the Introit for Trinity 15)*

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Going to church is going to grab the Lord's ear, drag it down to us and cry out, "Save us, Lord!" We want the Lord to preserve our lives because with the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature out there and inside, we are doomed without Jesus. Without Christ, those three enemies would tear us to pieces, drag us away from Christ and down to the depths of hell.

So we go to church to cry out, "Preserve my life!" Save my life. And the Lord does save your life. He saves it by NOT saving the life of His Son. He lets Jesus go to the cross and there suffer for your sins. He allows Jesus to be handed over, mocked, beaten, spit upon, scourged, and finally crucified. He allows wicked men to taunt and reject His Son and finally He lets Him die—all so He will preserve your life.

The answer to that prayer, "Preserve my life! Keep me alive!" is Jesus. For in Christ, God promises to keep you alive forever. In Baptism and the Supper, that is His promise—that He will preserve your life.

That doesn't mean you won't have suffering and even sickness and disease and even die some day. It does mean those things can't hurt you or destroy you. The Lord preserves your life with the gifts Christ gives you in the Divine Service tomorrow. He preserves you from sin and death.

The Divine Service, where Jesus' gifts are given out, is the place where the Lord answers that prayer, "Preserve my life! Keep me alive!" He does so by keeping you in Christ. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

*Preserve Your Word, O Savior, To us this latter day, And let Your
kingdom flourish; Enlarge Your church, we pray. O keep our faith from
failing; Keep hopes bright star aglow. Let nothing from truth turn us while
living here below. (Preserve Your Word, O Savior, LSB 658:1)*

St. Michael and All Angels

September 29, 2019

Today's Reading: Matthew 18:1-11

Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 1:19-36; Matthew 5:1-20

Jesus said, "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. There are so many ideas about angels and demons, so many movies and comics and stories and false pictures of these unseen beings that it's very easy as Christians to think of them as not real or as something other than what they are. The Lord tells His disciples that His little ones, those who are His in the faith, have angels who watch over them. Guardian angels. Your guardian angel.

Angel means "messenger," and that is how they appear in the Bible. Usually, when these holy and bright beings appear, the first words out of their mouths are, "Do not be afraid." That tells us that they were pretty scary to look at! But God's messengers come to deliver Good News. God's messengers come to fight against evil and God's enemies and to watch over His little ones. To watch over you.

All that God has said, He has said now through His Son. Therefore, we ought not expect to see visions of angels and to have God speak to us through them. But the Lord does have messengers. He does send you a man in a white robe to tell you, "Don't be afraid!" That's your pastor! His job is to stand before you as the angels stood at the tomb and say, "Christ is risen! He has conquered sin and death for you and forgives you all your sins." That's Good News from the messenger of the Lord.

But know also, that "behind the scenes," where you cannot see, the angels of the army of the Lord are doing battle with the devil and his demons. They watch over you and protect you as ones charged by God Himself with your safety. In realms you cannot see, the Lord's angels are protecting you and preserving you so that you may hear the life-giving Gospel of your Savior who saves you. As you are God's beloved and baptized child, He watches over you in many ways. His angels, too, are one of those ways, to serve you because you are the Lord's chosen in Christ. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O everlasting God, as You have ordained and constituted the service of angels and humans in a wonderful order, mercifully grant that, even as Your holy angels always serve You in heaven, so by Your appointment they may also help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen. (Collect for St. Michael and All Angels)

Monday of the 15th Week after Trinity

September 30, 2019

Today's Reading: 1 Kings 17:8-16

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

"For thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.' " (1 Kings 17:14)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The woman shared some flour and oil with Elijah and so the Lord made sure to provide for her until the famine was over. Easy lesson. If you do something nice, God will bless you abundantly. Wait a minute. That's not it. The Lord doesn't bless us and provide for us because we did something first. He provides for us, because He's our heavenly Father and that's what He does. As the Catechism reminds us, "only out of Fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me."

So why does she give Elijah something to eat when she and her son seem about to starve? She's exercising her faith. She's confessing, "I will make sure this prophet has something to eat. Then the Lord will have to feed me. How He will do that I don't know, but I trust that He will take care of it." She's not trusting in herself. She trusts in the Lord's fatherly goodness.

It's the same with our salvation. We aren't saved because we somehow got ourselves on the right track. Jesus doesn't come to save us because He recognizes our good intentions. No, the Lord saves us because He is the Savior and that's what He does. Our Lord goes to the cross, not because we deserve that He do so. He does it in order to obey the Father and save us.

It's the same way with His forgiveness now. The Lord doesn't wait for us to get our act together. He washes us in Baptism, comforts us with His Word and feeds us in His Supper so that we can't claim any credit for ourselves but instead learn to trust in the Lord to give us what we need.

And just so, our Lord is teaching us to be like the widow. When you give something up to help someone else, don't do it because you'll get something in return. Do it knowing the Lord will provide and not let you be in need. After all, He's given you His Son. He'll make sure all the rest is covered, too. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

All depends on our possessing God's abundant grace and blessing, Though all earthly wealth depart. They who trust with faith unshaken By their God are not forsaken And will keep a dauntless heart. (All Depends on Our Possessing, LSB 732:1)

Tuesday of the 15th Week after Trinity

October 1, 2019

Today's Reading: Galatians 5:25-6:10

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

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

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Bear one another's burdens? Carry someone else's overstuffed backpack? Listen to someone else's problems? Help somebody else with their problems? You've got enough to worry about with your own mix of school, work and family challenges. How can you have time for someone else's problems and troubles? Plus, the Bible says that Jesus fulfilled the Law, so what's with this "fulfill the Law of Christ?"

Oh yes, Christ DID fulfill the Law. Even the Law that says you're supposed to love your neighbor! He fulfilled it, not only by doing it, but also by bearing the full measure of its judgment upon sinners when He suffered on the cross. Your sins are forgiven. The Law of God no longer can condemn you.

But there is another law. It's the law of Christ by which He, bearing the burden of our sins, teaches us to bear one another's burdens. This is not a law given for YOUR benefit, as if you could work your way to heaven! That's taken care of by Jesus! No, this law is for the good of your neighbor. Your parents, your brothers or sisters, your friends, coworkers and classmates—THEY need your help. They need your help bearing the burdens of their work and lives and struggles, too.

After all, it's why the Lord has rescued you. It's why He has baptized you and made you His own, so that you will belong to others in serving them. It's why He absolves you of your sins, so that you will not hold the sins of others against them. It's why He lives in you by His Body and Blood, so that you will be knit together with others in the Body of Christ, where you learn to love and serve others.

Oh, you won't always do a good job. You'll try to bear someone's burdens and end up dropping them on their foot! That's why we live in Christ, to be forgiven for what we mess up and to have Him do in us, what we would never do on our own. Or, to put it another way, the Christ who has borne the burden of your sins now bears the burdens of others—through you! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O grant that nothing in my soul May dwell, but Thy pure love alone; Oh, may Thy love possess me whole, My joy, my treasure and my crown! All coldness from my heart remove; My ev'ry act, word, thought be love. (Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me, LSB 683:2)

Wednesday of the 15th Week after Trinity

October 2, 2019

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

Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. (Small Catechism: The Table of Duties: To Husbands)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. If you are a young man, odds are you're not a husband just yet. And if you are a young lady, you will never be a husband. But consider these words, young men, as to how you are to love your wife the Lord gives you some day. And consider these words, young ladies, as a warning against the sort of man who would not treat you this way!

Husbands are supposed to love their wives and not be bitter toward them. That means no grouching, complaining, whining, talking behind her back, telling others how stupid she is, and so on and on. A husband is only supposed to ever speak good things about his wife. And he is only ever to speak good things to her. Never things that are bitter, that is, that cause her to be bitter, or cause her to hurt and to feel pain by what her husband says. That's a tall order.

Yet consider Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church. He loves Her and is never bitter toward Her. He doesn't abuse Her with harsh words of how stupid She is, or foolish, or sinful, or imperfect. He doesn't point out the Church's faults and blab to everyone else about how She fails to measure up. No, Christ only ever speaks well of His Bride. She is holy. She is spotless. She is blameless and blemish free.

Christ loves you (men and women) as His Bride, the Church. He loves you not by being bitter to you but by taking on the bitter. The bitter suffering and mockery, the bitter pain of the cross, the bitter gall that touched his lips, the bitter pain of death. All that bitterness, caused by our sins, our Lord undergoes in order to love you. To save you. To call you perfect and spotless in God's sight.

Young men, you should love your wives like that! Husbands, you are to love your wives like that! But when you fail to, when you sin, then turn to Christ, who has made you His Bride in Holy Baptism, His Bride by His death and cross and preaching. And there, as His Bride, He loves you perfectly and forgives you. For your Bridegroom pours out no bitterness upon you but only His perfect and saving love. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O bride of Christ, rejoice; Exultant raise thy voice To hail the day of glory Foretold in sacred story. Hosanna, praise and glory! Our King, we bow before Thee. (O Bride of Christ, Rejoice, LSB 335:1)

Thursday of the 15th Week after Trinity

October 3, 2019

Today's Reading: Matthew 6:24-34

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

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Don't worry about food and drink and clothing? Isn't that what teenagers live for? Take that paycheck and go eat some fast food. How about shop at the mall? Put gas in your car? The adults worry about that stuff, too, but it's just bigger: house payments and car payments and their kid's tuition or whatever.

Life is more than food and clothing. Easy to say. But not for us to live by. We love the things of this world when we have them and we worry when we don't think we'll get what we need or want.

That's why Jesus lived His earthly life in true contentment. Not because He's just the kind of guy that doesn't care about that stuff. He didn't worry about clothing and food and things like that because He knew His Father would provide. But more than that: He didn't worry about that so His not-worrying would be credited to you.

On the cross, your worrying and coveting and intense love of the stuff of this world is laid upon Jesus and made His. On Calvary, Jesus is the worrier and coveter and His blood wipes out your worrying and coveting.

In your Baptism, His not-worrying and His not-coveting are draped around you. Because of His forgiveness, the Lord doesn't hold your sins against you and, instead, bestows upon you all that is His Son's. In fact, in Jesus, He gives you all the clothing and food you need! The clothing of Christ's righteousness is laid upon you at the font and the food of everlasting life is given to you in the Sacrament of the Altar. And if the Lord gives you THAT kind of clothing and food, the kind we need for this life is no problem for Him at all! So we'll let Him worry about that and know that He takes care of us. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, we implore You, let Your continual pity cleanse and defend Your Church, and because she cannot continue in safety without Your help, preserve her evermore by Your help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Trinity 15)

Friday of the 15th Week after Trinity

October 4, 2019

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

Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live? (Deuteronomy 4:33)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. In the Christian Church, as the Bible explains, the prophecy is fulfilled. The Lord's people see and hear His Word. This goes to the root of the Holy Spirit's work, making the blind to see and the deaf to hear God's Word to all generations. First God's Word of Law exposes our false gods, then the Good News of Jesus Christ FOR YOU reintroduces us to our Lord. This is how we receive the power of the Gospel that works in us. God gives us open ears to fear, love and trust Him alone to be our God.

For this specific purpose, God sends a preacher. A preacher announces words, and the words are finally two: "You are dead by God's judgment," and, "Arise on account of Christ's forgiveness." The Church receives these gifts of the Holy Spirit by faith. She has been given something to hope in that can never wither and die on the vine. She is given the free gifts of Christ, in Word and Sacrament, the forgiveness of all sins for Christ's sake through them, even raising the dead by them.

He opens our ears to hear His words: You are baptized. You are free to confess and be absolved of all your sins in My Name. You are given and receive the Lord's Supper. You read Scripture and hear it preached. You pray by the way of thankful response with certainty that I hear you, for I am your heavenly Father.

His Word fills our ears and abides in our hearts. More than that, His Spirit works in us to express our deepest need and thanks. He turns us away from sin, death, and the devil toward righteousness and toward Jesus Christ in whom the Church has received the forgiveness of all sins, whom we worship in the Spirit and truth, One God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to all generations, forever and ever. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

All who confess Christ's holy name, Give God the praise and glory. Let all who know His pow'r proclaim Aloud the wondrous story. Cast ev'ry idol from its throne, For God is God and He alone: To God all praise and glory! (Sing Praise to God, the Highest Good, LSB 819:5)

Saturday of the 15th Week after Trinity

October 5, 2019

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

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. (Psalm 86:5 from the Introit for Trinity 16)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Another week gone by. Another week of loving ourselves more than God and more than our neighbor. Another week of putting ourselves first. Another week of sins and another week of even good works that we thought were good but were tainted with selfishness and sin. Cheery thoughts!

But tomorrow it's not sins and gloom. Tomorrow it's abundant mercy. Tomorrow it's calling on God and rejoicing in His forgiveness. Tomorrow we don't come before the Lord as prisoners walking to their executions—all gloom and doom. No, tomorrow we come before the Lord because He is good and ready to forgive!

There's no doubt there. It will all be laid out in the liturgy and the preaching and in the gifts! The Lord is good and ready to forgive, because His Son has gone to the cross and has risen from the dead. The Lord is good and ready to forgive, because you are His own by water and the Word. The Lord is good and ready to forgive because your pastor has been put there to speak those words. The Lord is good and ready to forgive, because you have been gifted with the Lord's Body and Blood which does exactly that: forgives you your sins!

The Lord being "abundant in mercy" means He's got more forgiveness than you have sins! You can't out-sin the Lord's grace and mercy in Jesus! Every sin—big, little, known, unknown—has been wiped out by your Savior, Jesus.

When the Lord brings you to His house tomorrow, go with a smile on your face! After all, He's bringing you there, not to scold you and berate you but to forgive you, comfort you, and pour out His abundant mercy on you. All because of Jesus. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

How high the love of Christ! Beyond all thought it soars, And yet upon our passing lives Unmeasured mercy pours. (How Wide the Love of Christ, LSB 535:3)

The 16th Sunday after Trinity

October 6, 2019

Today's Reading: Luke 7:11-17

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

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

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Sometimes when we see someone crying about something, we don't know what else to say. So we blurt out, "Don't cry. It will be all right." Maybe it will. Maybe it won't. But we are uncomfortable and sometimes don't know what else to say.

When Jesus steps up to the coffin coming out of the village of Nain, that's what He tells the dead man's mother. "Don't weep." Thanks, Jesus! A mother who has lost her husband has also lost her son. I'm sure she'll appreciate that attempt at comfort.

But something's different. When Jesus says not to weep, it's more than just trying to say something nice. This is Jesus, the man who will die and rise from the dead. When Jesus says not to weep it's because He knows death causes weeping and He is here to make death cry! Jesus stands as One who is about to rob death of this man. So he touches the coffin and tells the man to get up and gives him to his mother! Take that, death! In your face, death!

Jesus dies for our sins. Our sins brought death. So it should be no surprise that Jesus rises from the dead the Third Day. He's gotten rid of our sins and that means death is not far behind. Jesus has given you victory over death.

That death happens the moment He touches your dead body in Holy Baptism and gives you to your Mother, the Church. At that washing of water and the Word, Jesus' death and resurrection are yours. Now the only thing to wait for is when He raises you from the dead on the Last Day. But that's the whole point: the death you will die in this life cannot keep you down. It can't harm you. It can't separate you from God; Jesus has kicked death in the face. And even though death can come for you, your Baptism kicks it in the face and promises that you have beaten death in Jesus and you will live on the Last Day and then forever! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, we pray that Your grace may always go before and follow after us, that we may be continually given to all good works; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Trinity 16)

Monday of the 16th Week after Trinity

October 7, 2019

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

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

So she said to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?" (1 Kings 17:18)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Death is a reminder that there is sin in the world—not surprising, since the punishment for disobeying God's Word in the Garden of Eden was death. No wonder the woman cried out to Elijah! Her son was dead. Thanks for the reminder that she's a sinner. That he's a sinner. That they're doomed to die.

But what was the purpose of that young man's death? In this case it seemed to be to show her God's grace when Elijah raised him from the dead. He died so that the widow would see God's power in raising him from the dead.

Why does God permit death? Well, we already heard that it's the punishment for our sins. But does God punish us just to teach us that we're in trouble? No, there's more, which points us to His mercy and salvation. God has afflicted us with death so that we learn to believe in the One man who can save us from death: God's Son, who conquered death. Jesus dies so that we may know that He has truly taken on our sins. But He rises from the dead to show us that sin and death have been taken down and defeated.

Now, by the waters of Holy Baptism, the Lord puts that death and resurrection on you, and makes it yours so that in the face of real death, you can laugh at and defy it. Not only that but by Jesus' Body and Blood, you have His promise that He will raise you up on the Last Day and give you eternal life. Death just simply cannot hold you. It cannot harm you. It cannot destroy you. It cannot separate you from God.

Sure, in this life, death is a sadness. But it is not the end. It is not even the reminder of sin anymore. Now it is the reminder that Christ is alive and you will be, too, when He comes again to give you eternal life. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Death, you cannot end my gladness: I am baptized into Christ! When I die, I leave all sadness To inherit paradise! Though I lie in dust and ashes Faith's assurance brightly flashes: Baptism has the strength divine To make life immortal mine. (God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It, LSB 594:4)

Tuesday of the 16th Week after Trinity

October 8, 2019

Today's Reading: Ephesians 3:13-21

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

Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (Ephesians 3:13)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. How is Paul's suffering the glory of the Ephesian Christians? Why would he say that? Paul suffered for the Name of Jesus. When the Gospel was first preached in the city of Ephesus, Paul got in trouble. He preached Christ to a city that was proud of Diana, a Roman goddess, who made the smiths and shopkeepers a whole lot of money in the fake god souvenir industry. But Paul was there to preach Christ and preach Christ he did.

Because Paul suffered, the Ephesians were saved by the preaching of Christ crucified and risen from the dead. That's what Paul means. In the big scheme of things, Paul would rather suffer persecution if it meant that the Ephesians heard the Gospel and were saved!

That's the strange thing about the Christian faith. It is a message of life that is hated by a sinful world which persecutes and tries to destroy it. But Jesus doesn't let that stop the Gospel. The Spirit continues to bring that Good News of the forgiveness of sins for Jesus' sake.

So your glory is your pastor's suffering. Now, he may not be in a prison camp, but he did have to put up with you in confirmation classes. He's the one who is troubled and wonders why you can stay out late on Saturday but not make time for church. He's the one who preaches Christ and reminds you of your Baptism so that you will not be led astray by all those fake religions out there that want to make you trust in yourself.

All of that is the Lord's work. The Lord worked through the sufferings of Paul to bring the Good News of His death and resurrection to those pagan Ephesians. He has worked through the toil and labor and sometimes suffering of your pastor to do the same—to save you from sin and death, make you His child, and give you everlasting life through His Son. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word; Curb those who by deceit or sword Would wrest the kingdom from Your Son And bring to naught all He has done. (Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word, LSB 655:1)

Wednesday of the 16th Week after Trinity

October 9, 2019

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

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (Small Catechism: The Table of Duties: Wives)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. These words of St. Paul are important because they will affect how you understand marriage and what you look for in a spouse someday. And the world doesn't like these words. These words make it sound like a wife is just supposed to put up with her husband and do whatever he says. There are some husbands who think like that!

But that's not what Paul means. When He's talking about Jesus he can't be talking about someone mean and burdensome! No, to "submit" means that a wife looks to her husband to receive love and goodness. She is to look to him as the one who provides for and takes care of her and wraps his arms around her when she needs protection and comfort. Young ladies, if that's not how your man acts toward you, don't even think about marrying him!

And this is how the Church submits to Christ. The Church looks to Jesus to be Her Savior, Her protector. The Church knows that it is Christ alone who can take away Her sins, wash Her clean, forgive Her, raise Her from the dead and give Her life. For Christ came to give His life for the Church. He died for Her and She was born from His side in the baptismal water and the communion blood that poured from His pierced side. On the cross, Jesus gave His life for His Bride. And she knows that He is the only One who can save and has saved Her from sin and death.

That's the picture that marriage provides—not perfectly of course, because there is sin in this world. But pay attention, young men and young ladies, so that you know what marriage is all about. And even more, recognize that you all are the Bride of Christ and it is for your sake that He gave His life so you can look to Him for all good things. That makes submitting not a burden, but a holy gift! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

The Church's one foundation Is Jesus Christ her Lord; She is His new creation By water and the Word. From heav'n He came and sought her To be His holy bride; With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died. (The Church's One Foundation, LSB 644:1)

Thursday of the 16th Week after Trinity

October 10, 2019

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

You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. (Deuteronomy 9:20-21)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Those who say there is no God are without fear of the Lord. People who try to adjust God to fit their ideas of what a god is and isn't have no fear of the Lord. Anyone who can't bring himself to think of God the way He really is, as He is in Jesus of Nazareth, has no fear of God—in the manger, on the donkey, on the cross. This man Jesus Christ is our God. This One, highest heaven, peace and glory. God hidden in Him who weeps over Jerusalem. The One who comes at midnight. The One who comes as Bridegroom. The One who comes in glory as Judge.

When we have God figured out, someone like Jesus is really very repetitive, or at least a possible embarrassment to the way we have taken things in hand and are running them. But to separate God and Jesus, to insist that God is not like that, is to tear the great and terrifying work of God at Calvary apart. If we insist that God didn't bear our sins for us then we will answer for them before God apart from Jesus. There's nothing more terrifying than that. You can only know God rightly, God as God FOR YOU, when He is wrapped in your sin.

Therefore, "Bless the Lord, you who fear Him." Bless the Lord who comes so that you don't have to suffer the worry of what you should do next; how it goes with you and your God; how you should praise Him; what you ought to believe about Him; how to trust God to be God for you. Jesus, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takes away the sins of the world is your God. When you trust that in Jesus, God is most truly God FOR YOU, this is true fear of the Lord your God. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Praise be to Him who, Lord Most High, The fullness of the God-head shares; And yet our human nature bears, Who came as man to bleed and die. And from His cross there flows our peace Who chose for us the path He trod, That so might sins and sorrows cease And all be reconciled to God. (Praise Be to Christ, LSB 538:4)

Friday of the 16th Week after Trinity

October 11, 2019

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

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. In the hymn, "Come Unto Me, Ye Weary," we sing in the first stanza, "Come unto me ye weary, And I will give you rest. O blessed voice of Jesus, which come to hearts oppressed! It tells of benediction, Of pardon, grace, and peace, Of joy that hath no ending, Of love that cannot cease." This is a delightful explanation as to why Jesus came into the world: to give sinners rest - pardon, grace, and peace!

Jesus came to save sinners. He didn't come to save nice, religious, spiritual, basically well-meaning people. He came to save those who are heavy laden. Jesus Christ does His Christ Jesus-ing among those who are heavy laden with the guilt of abortion, addiction to pornography, broken families, drugs, racism, homosexuality, or bullying at school.

The Good News is "good" because Jesus came to seek and save all you who labor and are heavy laden by the weight of sin, death, and hell. He didn't come to invite pretend sinners and false saints to come to Him.

Jesus doesn't let it stop at the invitation, "Come to Me..." He follows through with the promise that He will give you rest. What does this mean? It means He binds "rest" to Himself, giving Himself to you as a seal and sign that He is always with you: in the words of the sermon, in the Absolution, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. As He Himself assures us, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen."

In the rest which Christ Jesus delivers, all you who labor and are heavy laden can confess with the apostle Paul, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Jesus has taken our burden on Himself—taken it all the way to the cross. And, best of all, He left it there! It is finished. You are set free to be people of God. And "if the Son has set you free, then you shall be free indeed!" Now, may the pardon, grace, and peace of our LORD Jesus Christ be with you always. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

"And who-so-ever cometh, I will not cast him out." O patient love of Jesus, Which drives away our doubt, Which, though we be unworthy Of love so great and free, Invites us very sinners To come, dear Lord, to Thee! (Come unto Me, Ye Weary, LSB 684:4)

Saturday of the 16th Week after Trinity

October 12, 2019

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

Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, And teach me Your statutes. (Psalm 119:124 from the Introit for Trinity 17)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The prayer in the Introit for tomorrow is answered throughout the Divine Service. Here we ask for the Lord to deal with us according to His mercy. He does that when the pastor absolves us. He does that when we hear the very words of God, when we hear the preaching of Jesus and when we are given the Body and Blood of Jesus to eat and drink. All those gifts are the Lord's dealing with us according to His mercy.

When the Lord deals with us by His Word and Sacraments, His means of grace, He is dealing with us through Jesus. And when He deals with us through Jesus He is dealing with us according to His mercy. Take away Christ and there is no mercy, just the holy and righteous anger and judgment of God, ready to smite sinners.

But where Christ is, there is God's mercy, because there is the One who took our sins and carried them to Calvary and got rid of them. There is the One who rose from the dead for you. There is Jesus, who has ascended to the right hand of God and holds your righteousness safe until He comes again on the Last Day to awaken you from death.

Your life will be filled with things that will make you doubt God's mercy. You will wonder if God is even paying any attention to you at all. Fights with parents, trouble in school, a boss who hates you, the sickness or death of a friend, and on and on. The conclusion you might draw is that God is NOT merciful.

That's why in the Divine Service tomorrow, you'll be reminded of His mercy once again—not just reminded but given His mercy. His mercy is actually put upon you and given to you by His gracious Jesus—delivering gifts. Deal with us according to your mercy. He does! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

All glory to the One Who lavishes such love; The triune God in love Assures our life above. His means of grace for us are gifts He loves to give; All thanks and praise for His Great love by which we live! (The Gifts Christ Freely Gives, LSB 602:6)

*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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