2020 Reflections
Advent and Christmas

This season’s Reflections were written by Rev. George Borghardt, the pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Bossier City, Louisiana. He is also the president of Higher Things.

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

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The First Sunday in Advent
December 1, 2019

Today's Reading: Matthew 21:1-9
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 7:10-8:8; 1 Peter 3:1-22

And the crowds that went before Him and who followed after Him shouted saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the One coming in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Wait! That can’t be right. Jesus can’t be entering into Jerusalem! That’s Palm Sunday, Lent, and spring, not snowmen, winter, and Christmas! Shouldn’t Advent be a time for love, joy, hope, and peace and not thorns, blood, nails, and death? Jesus today is riding into Jerusalem to save His people from their sins—to save you and me. If Advent is about Jesus’ coming, it’s about Jesus’ coming to save you! That means He’s going to the cross, the suffering, the nails, the spear, and the tomb. That makes Advent all about Jesus’ coming to save you!

Outside of Jesus, outside of His coming to Jerusalem to save you, you would be left to yourself. You may indeed love, have joy in, hope in, and receive peace from all sorts of things in this world. All of those idols will fail you in the end because they can’t handle being treated as the true God. They fail because they aren’t the true God.

That’s one of the gifts of Advent! Advent is the time in which the Lord fixes your eyes on His coming. He’s coming into Jerusalem to the cross to save you. He’s coming on the Last Day to save you out of this world of pain and suffering. He’s coming in His gifts to wash your sins away, put eternal life in your ears, feed you His very Body and Blood for the remission of all your sins. He’s coming to give you true love, joy, hope, and peace.

Jesus is coming. Repent of your sins! Turn from finding your love in places other than Jesus’ coming to you. Let His salvation fill your songs with joy for He has rescued you from your sins. Place your hope in nothing other than the righteousness He splashed on you in your Baptism. Find your peace in His peace that is with you always in the Lord’s Supper. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for the First Sunday of Advent)
Monday of the First Week in Advent

December 2, 2019

Today's Reading: Jeremiah 23:5-8
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 8:9-9:7; 1 Peter 4:1-19

“Judah will be saved in His days and Israel will dwell safely. And this is the Name by which He will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness’” (Jeremiah 23:6).

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Jesus is coming! Judah will be saved from her sins. Jesus is coming! Israel will finally be safe from the consequences the judgment of God. Jesus is coming! You are righteous!

No longer will we look at the Scriptures and say, “The Lord Jesus brought them out of Egypt.” No! From now on we will say, “The Lord saved me! He saved me from all that has enslaved me!”

What Gospel! Jesus does better than just saving you from slavery in Egypt like He did for the children of God in the Old Testament! He saves you from your sins! He rescues from death! He redeems you from the power of the devil!

It isn’t just that you might have eternal life. You aren’t just possibly going to see heaven, if you live right. No! You are saved today! You will be in heaven on the Last Day. Heaven is right now a reality for you by faith. He is righteous. In His righteousness, you have eternal life, salvation, and heaven.

God doesn’t lighten His Law. No, He lays out His holy and pure Law. “My commandments are righteous. Your sins are not. Do what I say and live; don’t do and die.” Then Jesus does the Law for us to save us from the condemnation of the Law. He takes the punishment we deserve and suffers and dies for it. On the Third Day, He rose from the dead. In His coming to you in the waters of Holy Baptism, you rise from the dead with Him.

He is your righteousness before God. He is your righteousness before others. He is their righteousness before you and others. You don’t earn God’s favor. They don’t earn God’s favor. Only in Jesus, in His righteousness, are we righteous before God and those around us.

Jesus is coming! Today, He tells you that He’s got this gift for you in Advent: He Himself is your righteousness. You need nothing else before God and those around you. You have Jesus Himself. He is your righteousness. He saves you in His coming. In the Name + of Jesus.
Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Savior of the nations, come, Virgin’s Son, make here Your home! Marvel now, O heav’n and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth. (Savior of the Nations, Come, LSB 332:1)
Tuesday of the First Week in Advent
December 3, 2019

Today’s Reading: Romans 13:8-14
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 9:8-10:11; 1 Peter 5:1-14

Love does no evil to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the Law (Romans 13:10)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. God set the bar: Love God with your whole heart. Love your neighbor more than you love yourself. The bar never changes. It never gets easier. It never becomes doable by you.

What changes then? The God who can’t change, changes to save you. Jesus comes in your flesh and takes on your flesh. What you are unable to do, incapable of doing, God does in His Son. He keeps the Law for you: He loves God with His whole heart and He loves every neighbor on this little chunk of rock more than He loves Himself. Jesus does the most unthinkable Gospel: He counts His loving God and others as your loving God and others. This is called the “active obedience of Christ.” He lives your life for you.

But that’s only half the salvation job! The other half is punishment due you for when you haven’t loved God with your whole heart and your neighbor as yourself. God doesn’t lighten the Law on it, either! Instead, He takes His Son and sends Him to suffer the hell you deserve on the Cross. This is called the “passive obedience of Christ.” Jesus dies your death on the Tree.

You are saved only in the holy life (active) and bitter sufferings and death (passive) of Jesus. Apart from Jesus, you can’t please God and you can’t love those around you the way God requires. Outside of Jesus, God punishes you for what you do and don’t do.

Here’s the Gospel: You aren’t apart from Christ! In Christ, in the forgiveness of sins, in Jesus’ righteousness, you now live free! You owe nothing to anyone—neither to God nor to those around you—but to love them as God in Christ has loved you. God gave up His Son for you, so you love them, too, with the same love and self-sacrificing treatment as God in Christ has given you.

His love for you is today’s Advent gift to you! His love for you in Jesus fulfills the Law for you. Love does not do harm to those around you. Love doesn’t harm you, either. You love because He has loved you first, with His love that went through hell and death to save you. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Not by human flesh and blood, By the Spirit of our God, Was the Word of God made flesh—Woman’s offspring, pure and fresh. (Savior of the Nations, Come, LSB 332:2)
Wednesday of the First Week in Advent

December 4, 2019

Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 10:12-27, 33-34; 2 Peter 1:1-21

What does such baptizing with water indicate? It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. (The Small Catechism: Baptism, Part 4)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ came and took on your flesh. He became like you in every way. He lived His life for you. He was betrayed into the hands of sinners for you and suffered for your sins. He died on the cross. After three days, He rose from the dead.

You are the baptized. You’ve been born from above in the water and the Spirit. You have received by faith Christ’s holy life. In Baptism, you suffered with Christ, were crucified with Him, died with Him, and were buried with Him. In the water and the Word, God raised you with Him and seated you in the heavenly places by faith in Him.

What’s true of Jesus is true of you by faith. He’s saved. You are saved in Him, He’s holy. You are holy, He’s the Righteous One, You are righteous. He reigns. You will reign in Him on the Last Day.

You don’t feel holy. You look at yourself and don’t see yourself righteous. And pure? You are so not pure all by yourself. And even if you did feel holy, righteous, and pure by yourself, God’s Law says you are a sinner, deserving nothing but punishment.

That’s the Advent gift for you today: repentance and forgiveness. Your life is spent every day drowning your old way of living and all that is true of you outside of Jesus in the waters of your Baptism. In this way, all that is true of you in Jesus might be lived out for others. You die to yourself, confessing your sins, so that He might raise you daily from the dead in your Baptism for others: to put them first, to meet their needs before your needs, to love as God has loved you in the giving up of His only-begotten Son for you.

Live your life as a baptized child of God, confessing your sins and receiving forgiveness. Try to be a better person for others. Confess when you aren’t. Receive forgiveness in Jesus. This is the Christian life! Believe that Jesus has saved you, and love those around you. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

St. Paul writes in Romans, chapter six: “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Romans 6:4 (The Small Catechism: Baptism, Part 4)

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 Second Sunday after Christmas

January 5, 2020

Today's Reading: Matthew 2:13-23

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt in a dream saying, "Rise and take the child and His mother and go to the land of Israel for those seeking the life of the child are dead." (Matthew 2:19-20)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. On the Twelfth Day of Christmas, we see baby Jesus again! He’s done what He always does—He’s earning our salvation.

God had called the children of Israel His people. He said that He was their God and they were His people. He kept them safe in a famine and brought them to Egypt. When the Egyptians enslaved His people, He brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. But in the wilderness they complained against God and then rejected God, saying that a golden calf actually had saved them from Egypt.

God’s people failed Him. To save them, He decided to live His life for them and to do what was required of them. He sent His Son. Jesus is Israel, His people. He is born, flees to Egypt like Israel. Then, He’s called out of Egypt.

Jesus checks all the boxes that are required of children of God. He does what you can’t. You can’t justifiably yourself. So He lives His life in your place. Then He suffers the punishment you earn when you fail to keep what God requires of you. He is Israel for you and so He makes you Israel.

God leaves nothing about your salvation up to you! This way it is most sure! Salvation and faith and hope and joy and love from God’s faithfulness. He is faithful. You are faithful to God in Him. He is holy, You are holy in Him. He is in heaven, so you will be in heaven.

What a Twelfth Day of Christmas gift! Baby Jesus is all about the work today of being your Savior. He is Israel for you. You are Israel, God’s people, because of Him, He’s the Son of God. You are a child of God in Him. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Almighty God, You have poured into our hearts the true Light of Your incarnate Word. Grant that this Light may shine forth in our lives; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for the Second Sunday after Christmas)

Thursday of the First Week in Advent

December 5, 2019


You will say on that day, “I will praise you, O Lord, for although you were angry with me, your anger was turned away and you comforted me.” (Isaiah 12:1)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The Last Day is coming. Jesus is coming. Do you need to be afraid? Is God going to get you?

He should punish you. You certainly deserve it. If you don’t think you do, you’re not really being honest with yourself. You and I live each day for ourselves—us before God and us before others. It’s not that we don’t love others. We do love others. We just love ourselves more. It shows in how we treat others. It shows in how we deal with God.

We push ourselves forward at the expense of others. We tear them up to make ourselves look good. We take what isn’t ours. We expect others to be generous while we hold back for ourselves. If we act this way with those around us who see every day, how could we possibly love and put God first, who we never see?

Today’s Advent gift is in the little word “turned.” God should be angry. He’s right to be angry. It’s fair that He’s angry. But God changes. He turns from anger. He doesn’t give wrath.

It’s not that God walks away to control His anger, or decides to just leave us alone. He doesn’t just walk away and count to ten. No, instead of ignoring us or punishing us, He sends His Son into our flesh to save us. It’s a complete 180-degree turn! He should damn us and punish us but instead He saves us in the death of Christ!

The same God who died for you on the cross is the God who is coming on the Last Day to save you! The Last Day isn’t catch-you-in-a-sin-day but save-you-from-destruction-day. He wants to save you. He wants to save others. Everything that He does do is just that—even His coming back on the Last Day.

God wants to save. He’s not going to repent of turning from destroying you. He’s in this, committed to it, in the suffering and death of Jesus.

Don’t be afraid of the Last day. Don’t be afraid of today. Jesus is not only going to save you. Jesus is your salvation. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” (Isaiah 12:2-3)
Friday of the First Week in Advent
December 6, 2019


The Lord is not negligent in keeping His promises as some consider negligence, but He is longsuffering with you, not wanting anyone to perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God is not slow. He’s not asleep at the wheel while bad things happen to you. He’s not an absentee Father. It may feel that way sometimes. It feels that way sometimes and even looks that way outside the faith.

But you aren’t outside the faith. In Jesus, you see how God truly is in Christ. God created you. God moved the heavens and earth—literally the stars—in order for His Son to come to save you. “At just the right time, God sent His Son, born under a woman, born under Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:5-6).

Everything that God does from creation until the Last Day, everything that He works, is for you to be saved in Jesus. He does good to save you. He even works evil things into good in order to save you, all so that He would be your God and you would be His children.

Faith sees this! Faith trusts that God makes all things new and good for you in Christ. He’s not asleep. He’s not slow. He’s not twiddling His thumbs when bad is happening to you! Faith knows quite the opposite! Faith trusts that God is good because faith believes that God has sent His Son to save us. If God loved us that way, if He gave up His only-begotten Boy, how much more is He going to work things out in this life for your good!

The same is true about the Last Day! God isn’t planning on the worst time to catch you in your worst moment to return. He’s not trying to damn you. You know this because of Calvary! Everything that He does is to save you and those around you. So He’s holding back the Last Day in order to try save as many as possible. He wants us to hear His Law and repent of the evil that we do daily and much. He wants us to fill our ears with His Gospel so that we would receive the life and salvation won for us by the suffering and death of Jesus.

God’s not messing around while you suffer. Stop that doubt! All you need to do is look at the resurrection! Jesus died and rose for you, God loves you. He’s even holding back the Last Day to save you. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Then stepped forth the Lord of all From His pure and kingly hall; God of God, yet fully man, His heroic course began. (Savior of the Nations, Come, LSB 332:4)

The Eleventh Day of Christmas
January 4, 2020


Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger. (Introit for the Second Sunday after Christmas)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Everyone thinks babies can’t believe. After all, they are just babies. They can’t feed themselves. They can’t talk. They obviously can’t believe.

Dr. Luther said that he didn’t know if babies could believe or not. He just knew that the Lord Jesus said for us to baptize them. So he let the Scriptures trump what he thought about babies.

What an insightful lesson! We are used to hearing that we should let Jesus tell us about Himself in the Scriptures. We don’t normally think that we are going to learn about ourselves from the Scriptures.

You are a sinner. That’s what the Scriptures say. Whether you feel like a sinner or feel like a basically good person, the Bible says that every thought, inclination, and gut feeling you have is slanted toward sin. You were born with a natural understanding of right and wrong, but you lack the ability to actually do right in God’s eyes. You are completely and totally not right with God.

The Father was mindful of you—even you! He loved you in the giving up of His Son. Jesus was born to rescue you from you, to live as you are required to live, and to give you the credit for all the good that He did. He was then beaten and punished for the good and the bad that you have done. That’s why He suffered and died! He was crucified for your sins. On the Third Day, He was raised for your justification, your forgiveness. This is what the Scriptures say about your salvation.

The Law of God and His Gospel are true despite how you feel. Both are His Word to you. Both are true for you. To save you, God uses His Law to condemn you for your good and bad and His Gospel to forgive you. He speaks the Law when you need Law. He gives the Gospel when you need forgiveness.

You are a baptized child of God on the days that you feel so much a Christian that you could move mountains with your faith. He’s true for you when you feel so lonely that you can’t even pray a word to Him.

And when you doubt, look at the little babies. They have no strength to even hold up their heads, but God has ordained that out of their mouths could come strength. He promised it. His Word is true. His Son was born a baby to save us. We can bank on His salvation. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt
The Tenth Day of Christmas
January 3, 2020

Today’s Reading: Galatians 4:1-7

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent out His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to buy us out of the Law, so that we might receive the inheritance as sons. (Galatians 4:3-4)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God’s timing is perfect. He’s God, after all. He planned to save you before there was a world. He could have picked any time to do it. He picks just the right time to send His Son.

Luther says that the birth of Jesus should cause us to repent. We caused this! God had to send His Son to die on the cross to save us from the evils that we do daily and much. We caused God to have to do this!

God doesn’t have to do anything. That’s part of being God. He is perfect and complete. God doesn’t lack anything. He does the “have to” of sending His Son because there is no other way to save you and me.

God Himself is born to save you. That’s why He came! He didn’t come to teach you truths about the universe or to let you do what you want to do. Jesus came to take upon Himself the good and the bad that you have done and replace them with the good that He has done before God. He then suffered and died on the cross for the good and bad you have done. He came to call you out of your sins and by taking them on Himself, to die for them.

Then, as you are forgiven and at peace with God and those around you, God’s holy will of the Law teaches you to die to those sins that Christ died for, and to rise before God and live for others. His Law teaches you to force, compel, and die to put others first. You live for them first. You love them more than you love you. You love them the way God would have you love them in His Law. Jesus teaches you to do this. He came to save you. He then came for you to love others.

God has perfect timing. That’s part of being God! He waits until just the right time to send His Son to buy you back from your sins. He wins your salvation and puts you at just the right time and place to love those around you. It’s not an accident that you are saved. God planned it! He also planned for you to be right where you are right now to love those around you with the love that He gave you on Good Friday and Easter. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Saturday of the First Week in Advent
December 7, 2019


Daughter of Zion, behold, surely your salvation is coming. The LORD will cause His glorious voice to be heard, and you shall have gladness of heart. (From the Introit for the Second Sunday in Advent)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Advent means “He comes.” What is coming? Salvation is coming! Your Lord Jesus is coming!

The King is coming! Get ready! Make ready! Clean up your house. Fill in the holes in your life—those potholes that mark your way that you always mean to fix but always put off until tomorrow. Knock down the mountains of sin in your life. You don’t have any more time to get things right. The Lord Jesus is coming!

That’s Advent! Advent is the season where the Lord celebrates for us His coming. He is coming in the manger on Christmas. He’s born to ride into Jerusalem and to die on the cross for the sins of the whole world. He’s going to shake the heavenly bodies when He comes in the clouds of heaven on the Last Day. He’s coming to you tomorrow in His gifts: His Word, water with the Word, and His Body and Blood under the bread and wine at His Supper.

He makes us ready for His coming by cleaning up our lives. He exposes our sin—the hills and the valleys. He makes everything straight so that we can be nothing but given to by Him when He comes to save us! That’s the season of Advent!

Repent! That’s the violet of the season of Advent. Turn from your sins. Get ready. Make ready. Don’t wait any longer to fix your relationships. Repent to your family, friends, and neighbors. Make up like it’s the end of the world—it just might be.

Jesus is coming. You will hear His voice. He won’t be grumpy and angry. He will show you His happy face. For He will save you from your fears, from your troubles, from your failures, and from your death. He will speak to you kindly. He will comfort you. He will make it all better. How could He not? He went through hell and death to save you.

Jesus is coming! Salvation is adventing! You’re going to be just fine. No, better yet, you’ll be saved! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Jacob like a flock Restore us, O God; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved! Return, we beseech You, O God of Hosts, look down from heaven and see. Let Your hand be upon the Man of Your right hand, upon the Son of Man whom You made strong for Yourself. (From the Introit for the Second Sunday in Advent)
The Second Sunday in Advent

December 8, 2019

Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 24:14-25:12; 1 John 2:15-29

And then you will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory. (Luke 21:27)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Today's Gospel sounds a little scary, doesn't it? There will be signs in the moon and stars. The earth will be in distress. The nations will be in anguish and perplexed because of the roaring of the seas and waves. People will be fainting from fear. The heavenly powers themselves will be shaken.

It is scary! On the Last Day, everything that we trust and rely on will come apart at the seams. The skies will go wacky. The earth will shake. The rocks will split. God will judge the world. There will be no place to hide and no escape.

Wait, that sounds somewhat familiar, doesn't it? This has happened before in the Scriptures. On the cross, as Jesus hung between heaven and earth to answer for your sins and mine, the heavenly bodies were shaken. The skies grew dark. The earth shook and the rock split.

The Last Day outside of Christ is an awful and petrifying day. There will be no escape. No running away from the judgment of Almighty God on His creation as He gives all of us what we deserve—destruction, fire, and hell.

But you are not outside of Christ. You are of Christ and Christ is of God. He came for you. He suffered for you. He died for you. He Last Day-ed for you on the Cross. He rose, giving you a preview of your Last Day: you will rise again.

The Last Day has already happened for you, on Good Friday. You rose with Jesus on Easter morning just as your loved ones will come out of their graves on the Last Day. The tomb couldn't hold Him, and it won't hold those you love. That's true on the Last Day, too, when the Lord will call you out of this world and you will always be with Him.

When everything starts to go to hell on earth and you think to yourself, “This is my Last Day,” don’t hide under something. No, look up. Your redemption, your Jesus, your salvation, is drawing near! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds: through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent)

The Ninth Day of Christmas

January 2, 2020


You shall have no other gods. What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things. (The Small Catechism: First Commandment)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. There are not three Gods but one God.

The Father is Lord. The Son is Lord. The Holy Spirit is Lord. The Father is Almighty. The Son is Almighty. The Spirit is Almighty. The Father is everywhere. The Son is everywhere. The Holy Ghost is everywhere. We don’t have three Lords, three Almighties, or three everywhere, but one Lord who is Almighty and everywhere.

God is Triune. It’s a mystery. It’s hard to explain. One plus one plus one doesn’t equal one. It equals three. But, one times one times one does equal one. Is it that simple? Hardly! But it is a start.

Maybe the best way to understand the Trinity is in the Gospel. The Father loves you in the giving up of His Son. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to deliver the Father’s sending of His Son to you.

Other religions stumble and reject this doctrine. They can’t grasp how Christians claim to have only one God, but worship three Persons. It doesn’t make sense.

But the Holy Trinity isn’t some abstract doctrine that we learn in confirmation. The Holy Trinity is about how God is for you. The Lord is for you. The almighty and omnipresent God is completely and totally for you. But, we don’t have three “for yous” but one God is who completely and totally for you.

The Gospel is that the Trinity is about saving you. God the Father sends God the Son. God the Son is true God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, and true Man, born of the Virgin Mary. It takes both to save you. And it takes God the Holy Spirit to make that gift yours in the Word, the water, and the bread and wine. But it doesn’t take three Gods to save you. It takes one God, three Persons, all committed Calvary-and-Easter much to save you.

Live today in the certainty that the Triune God is for you. God has revealed Himself. He has shown you who and how He is. He’s the God who sends His Son to save you. He’s the God who makes that salvation yours today in His gifts. He’s the One God, the only God, and your God. You are the one He has saved. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt
Circumcision and Name of Jesus

January 1, 2020

Today's Reading: Luke 2:21

And after eight days were accomplished, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given to Him by the angel before He was conceived in the womb (Luke 2:21)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Happy New Year! Happy Circumcision Day! What cutting edge theology! You have to be sharp as a knife to not miss this New Year’s Day gift!

All puns aside, today is a happy day in Christ. New Year’s Day, eight days after Christmas, is the celebration of our Lord’s circumcision. Baby Jesus shows you how committed He is for you: The only-begotten Son of God sheds His blood for you, He keeps the law for you. He is circumcised. He shows you the first drops of Calvary.

This is how God is toward you! His Son keeps the Law for you and in your place. He sheds His blood for you. He is committed to saving you even as a Baby. God is committed to saving you.

Start the New Year repenting of your sins. Don’t just make New Year’s resolutions. Make real changes. Give up your sins. Stop doing the things that you know are against God’s Law. Confess the terrible sins that keep you up at night: abortion, hate, lust, fornication, adultery, porn, stealing, and cheating. Repent of the sins that you aren’t afraid of: the idolatry of trusting in your money or righteousness, despising of God’s Word and His gifts, misusing His Name, gossip, coveting, and the like. These sins destroy your faith and show that you are a strong sinner.

Then, believe in the One who shed His blood for you for the first time today. In your Baptism, your strong sins were washed away in the blood of your even stronger Savior. In His Word, receive the comfort that does not pass away. Eat His Body, drink His Blood, and live forever.

The life you want to live, the good you want to do in the New Year, and the love you want to give, won’t be found by you making a commitment to be better. Your resolutions may last for a while, but they won’t stick. True change, lasting change, is found only in Jesus. Receive His forgiveness and then learn from the Law to truly die to your selfish life and live for others.

A blessed and happy Circumcision Day! Jesus sheds His first blood today for you to save you and make your new year filled with love for others! Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Monday of the Second Week in Advent

December 9, 2019

Today’s Reading: Malachi 4:1-6

But for all who fear my Name, the sun of righteousness shall rise up with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall...(Malachi 4:2)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The Last Day is a good day. It’s the end of oppression and stress and suffering and death. It’s the Lord’s Day. The Last Day is going to be your best day.

God is going to save you. Nothing is going to stop Him. He will rip the very heavens apart and burn everything up to rescue you!

I know that life isn’t fun. People hurt us. We suffer without end. We get sick. We don’t get well. Our marriages fail and families break up. Sin is awful: murder, hate, disobedience, rape, adultery, fornication, stealing, slander, jealousy, lying, and coveting. Evil seems to reign. We are beaten, bruised, and just done. Nothing ever seems to get better!

Then, when it can’t get any worse, when we are so overrun that we can’t breathe any more, He comes! Jesus comes! God advents to save you! That’s the Last Day!

The Last Day is Gandalf showing up with the riders of Rohan at just the right time to save us from being overrun by orcs. It’s the police driving up when the burglar is about to steal your stuff. It’s the EMS resuscitating your loved one who just had a heart attack. It’s the guy on your team intercepting the pass in the end zone so your team can win.

Jesus comes! All your enemies are defeated! They were defeated on the Cross. That’s true today by faith. The Last Day: you see it, you experience it as Jesus comes with all the angels and archangels and opens up a barrel of heavenly victory for you and all those who believe.

He advents and sin is done. The devil is thrown into hell. And there will be no more death, no more suffering, and no more pain. If you could cry, God Himself would wipe your tears away. Your enemies? They will be defeated!

See? The Last Day is going to be a great day for you, for Jesus has already suffered all the bad for you. When He comes again, He will show you how much of an Advent gift the Last Day truly will be! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Lo! He comes with clouds descending, Once for ev’ry sinner slain;
Thousand, thousand saints attending Swell the triumph of His train;
Alleluia, Alleluia, alleluia! Christ the Lord returns to reign (Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending, LSB 336:1)
Tuesday of the Second Week in Advent
December 10, 2019

Today's Reading: Romans 15:4-13

And may the God of hope fill you with all joy (gaiety) and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Be positive. The future is bright. The sky is the limit for you. Everything is going to work out for you. It really is!

This isn't only a mantra to repeat over and over again or some sort of crutch to get by with on a tough day. This isn't the youthful optimism of a teenager who says, "I'm going to be president of the United States." Nor is this the power of positivity. And it certainly isn't some false gospel that if you believe, then God will make you rich.

God is the God of Hope. He has sent His Son to live your life and die your death that you might have hope: hope in the future, hope for a better tomorrow. Hope that you actually will be better than you were today. Hope that there will a day when the sin you fight isn't going to drag you down. Hope for a better you for others. Hope in the power of God to save even you from this veil of tears. Hope in eternal life.

The world around you says otherwise: "You need to make your own reality, Everything is up to you. If you get better, it'll be because you make it better." You can try, but the universe is a cold place and things don't always work out for you. The world lies to you with false hope; you can get better, you are better, you can do anything all by yourself.

Don't listen to the world's lies. Hope in yourself is a failed hope. You won't, can't, will never do the things on your own that you want. God has saved you from ever being on your own like that again.

Your hope is in God. That's a real hope and true hope! God is going to be good to you, He's going to make things right and good, and it's going to work out because God is going to work it out for you in Christ. He already has. It's up to Him to make it good in your world.

He never promises that it will be the way I want it to be. He's a bigger God than that! It'll be better than you or I could ever come up with on our own. For the God who didn't spare His Son to save me, will make all things new for you.

What if you fail? What if you fall on your face? God will use that, too, for good. You'll win even in your losses. You'll live even in your death. That's what He did for Jesus on His Cross. The God of hope does the same for you. You'll see, But, don't believe me, Believe Jesus. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

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Eve of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus
December 31, 2019

Today's Reading: Romans 8:31b-39

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Shall affliction, or trouble, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (Romans 8:35)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Enter the New Year tonight with the certainty that you are loved by God. God has your back. Everything is going to work out for your good in Jesus.

Death can't harm you. It swallowed Jesus first and was done in by the Son of God. Death has no teeth. It might gnaw on you a bit, but all it can do is cause you to take a nap. God will wake you.

The grave cannot hold you, either. How could it? The grave couldn't hold Jesus. You are in Jesus. He burst out of the tomb. You will burst out of the tomb, too!

God won't punish your sins in Jesus. Your sins are the only thing still stuck in the grave of Jesus! He lives. You live, too! You are free from your sins, free from guilt, free from the condemnation of hell, and best of all, free to love others as you have been loved by Jesus.

Whatever life throws at you, you will be just fine in that good news. Cancer isn't something to fear in Jesus. Sickness can't be the end for you. Poverty and debt aren't going to swallow you in Jesus. Loss will only be temporary. God is going to turn even your losses into wins!

Tribulations, suffering, and pain will be unpleasant, but they won't be the end! You are without end in Jesus because He is without end! He is YOUR Alpha and Omega. He's your beginning and end.

Every good word that I'm giving you, every comforting sentence I'm typing is centered on the Cross of Jesus. None of this rests on you! Jesus lived for you. He died for you. He rose for you. That's true on the last day of 2019. It's most certainly true at midnight when 2020 begins.

Celebrate tonight. Kiss your sweetheart. Tell your parents you love them. Let them know everything is going to be okay because it's more than okay in Jesus. Win or lose, happy or sad, healthy or sick, rich or poor, Jesus is going to carry you through 2020 until He returns. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Eternal God, we commit to Your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending and commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. In the new year, abide among us with Your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for New Year's Eve)
The Sixth Day of Christmas

December 30, 2019

Today’s Reading: Isaiah 11:1-5

A twig from the stump of Jesse will come forth and a sprout out of his roots shall bear fruit. (Isaiah 11:1)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. King David’s line was as good as dead. The Assyrians would cut the tree down and burn the firewood in God’s judgment against Judah. God had spoken. He’s done with Judah’s unfaithfulness and so they are done, too.

But conquered Judah means no more Davidic king. God doesn’t forget His promises even when we forget them. God keeps His Word even when it means that His solution is out of the box. King David’s kingdom is conquered? No problem! I’ll go back to the tree!

A twig shoots out of the dead stump of David’s dad, Jesse. A new king sprouts forth. He’s from David’s line but not like David. He’s David son, but He’s also David’s Lord.

Jesus is the sprout! He’s not cute like Groot in Guardians of the Galaxy. He certainly has a bigger vocabulary! But twig Jesus doesn’t grow into a tree, He grows into a Cross. He’s born of the virgin, born into our world of law, to buy us back from our sins. He is born to free us from the bondage of not just the Assyrians, but from death itself! The Shoot from the Dead Tree of Jesse takes on your sin and death. You receive Jesus’ life. He suffers and dies. You live forever in Jesus’ resurrection.

Christmas is a good time to observe that God doesn’t promise that everything will work out the way you think. That’s not God’s promise. His promise is that you will be saved. That’s not that you will get the job, the good grade, the girlfriend, the boyfriend, the life that you want. Sometimes, the Assyrians may come into your life and wreck things, He is faithful in Jesus. He will carry you through. He will save you.

King David’s line wasn’t dead. It only looked that way. God raised up the Christ, the Son of David, to reign forever. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus, Amen. ~Rev. George Borghardt

O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.” (Collect for the First Sunday after Christmas)

Wednesday of the Second Week in Advent

December 11, 2019

Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 28:14-29; 1 John 5:1-21

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

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Only God can forgive sins. That’s why He sent your pastor to forgive your sins. He wants to do what only He can do: He wants to forgive you.

You can’t live without breathing. You can’t live without confessing your sins to God. If you say you have no sin, you are deceiving yourself and the truth of the Gospel isn’t in you (1 John 1:8). If you confess your sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive your sins and cleanse you from all your unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). In Confession, you breath out and confess your sins. Then, you breathe in forgiveness from the Holy Spirit. You breathe out you and breathe in the Spirit. That’s your life!

Can you directly confess your sins to God? Yes! That works, too! God wants to hear your prayers. God wants to absolve you in the suffering and death of Jesus. He wants to save you.

Sometimes you confess your sins and still feel guilty, don’t you? I do, too. I think to myself, “Did God really forgive that?” I despair that I’m going to go to hell for the evil I’ve done. I’ve sinned. I’ve hurt people. I’ve wrecked people’s lives. I’m awful. I know I’m forgiven, but I also know how much damage I’ve done.

You don’t have to despair. You have a person who works for God who has vowed never to reveal the sins you confess to him, so that God can tell you that you are really and truly forgiven. When you hear your pastor speak that word of forgiveness won by Jesus on the cross, you can know without doubt that God has truly forgiven you.

The gift of Holy Absolution is for your comfort! God doesn’t want you to ever be afraid of what you have done. He wants you to know without doubt that you have been forgiven in Christ’s holy life and bitter suffering and death. He wants you to hear it, to hear His voice speak it to you. That’s why He’s given you a pastor. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. ~Rev. George Borghardt

Ev’ry eye shall now behold Him Robed in glorious majesty; Those who set at naught and sold Him, Pierced and nailed Him to the tree, Deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing, shall their true Messiah see (Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending, LSB 336:2)
Beloved, making all diligence to write you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you to defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Fight for the faith. Defend it. Protect it. Guard it. The alternative is deadly!
False doctrine kills your faith. It robs you of the true comfort of the Gospel. It’s as dangerous for you as the snake in the Garden. Just a few sentences of doubt from Satan ended paradise. Beware!
The only salvation for sinners is in the suffering and death of Jesus. Christ lived His life for you and in your place. He died your death on the cross. On Easter morning, He rose from the dead.

Only in Jesus are you saved. Only in Christ’s salvation do you have peace with God and true peace with those around you. Only in the forgiveness of your sins can you stand before God on the Last Day. In Jesus, you have eternal life.

You are on your own outside the Cross of Christ. You stand before God by what you do and don’t do. You have no hope of a better tomorrow or Last Day. Outside of the Lord’s being born in your flesh, you have to make up for what you have done with God and suffer the punishment due you for everything you’ve ever done.

You are baptized. You aren’t outside His Word. You are born from above. You believe that He came to save you, He has called you out of your sins and has freed and rescued you from them. In Jesus, you don’t have to live in your sins anymore. In Jesus, you are free.

You will sin in this life still. Sometimes you do what you don’t want to do. Other times, you fall back into your former way of death. You know there is no excuse for your sin. You don’t have license to do it. Your sins make you hate yourself. They hurt you. They damn you.

But your sin can only rule you apart from Christ. In Christ, you are free. In Christ, you don’t have to live in your sins. In Christ, you are freed from them in the suffering and death of Jesus. In Christ, your sins can’t define you. You aren’t enslaved to them anymore. You died to them and have been raised with Christ in the waters of Holy Baptism. You have new life—eternal life—in Christ and in Christ alone.

This is why Jude encourages you to fight for the faith. Defend it. Protect it. Guard it. Let no one rob you of the Jesus who saves you in His Word. Accept nothing less than salvation by grace alone, received by faith alone, flowing from Scripture alone. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

-Rev. George Borghardt

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Pious Simeon was waiting and waiting. He had waited literally all his life. He had been promised by God that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Christ.

Baby Jesus arrives in the temple to be presented to the Lord as required by the law. He has no need to be purified. He has no need to be presented to the Lord. He is the only-begotten Son of God. He is without sin.

Jesus is born under the Law for you. That’s why He shows up at the temple! He is keeping the Law for you. What is required of you, He does. Every last law is done perfectly for you and counted by God as if you had done it. There is no time in which Jesus isn’t doing what He is doing for you—even when He is just a baby.

He’s there for Simeon, too, whose wait is over! When Jesus enters the temple, the old man scoops up the Infant God into His arms and bursts into song! “Lord, let me die!” That’s pious Simeon’s song! He’s seen the Lord Jesus. He’s held His Savior. He’s not afraid. He’s not resigned to his fate. No, He’s received His Lord! He’s ready to go now!

“Lord, now let your servant go in peace!” You sing with Simeon after the Lord’s Supper. The hymn is called by the Latin for the first few words of this verse ("Nunc Dimittis"). Don’t miss the significance!

After you have received the Lord’s Supper, you, too, are ready to go! You are free from your sins. You are free from your mistakes. He’s put His Body and Blood into you and has also bodied and blooded those around you. You are completely and totally at peace with God and those around you.

That’s the gift of the Lord’s Supper! In the forgiveness of your sins received in the Supper, you receive eternal life. For where your sins are forgiven, you have eternal life. You are free. Ready to go, too!

No matter what happens today, or tomorrow, or next year, you have eternal life in the Body and Blood of Jesus. You are free now to depart in peace to live for others as you have been lived for by Jesus. And when you do fall asleep, you’ll join Simeon in front of the throne of God. Your work will be done, your sins forgiven, and your good works following you. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt
The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
December 28, 2019

Today's Reading: Matthew 2:13-18
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 52:13-54:10; Matthew 2:13-23

And then Herod, seeing that he was fooled by the Magi, became exceedingly angry and he sent and destroyed all the children in Bethlehem and in all the nearby regions who were two years old and younger, according to the time which he had determined precisely from the Magi. (Matthew 2:16)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The Magi had shown up in Jerusalem looking for the King of the Jews. The king they were following the star to find wasn’t Herod! Herod wanted to kill Jesus. Awkward! So Herod did what ancient kings do—he tried to eliminate all his enemies. He wanted to kill Jesus.

The children in Bethlehem didn’t do anything to Herod. They were innocent. They were simply at the wrong place and the wrong time, in between Herod’s hatred of Magi and his desire to kill Baby Jesus.

Sin, evil, death, pain, suffering, cancer, and the death of innocents is all because of sin. The world is evil. It’s the place where the devil rules. It is awful. It’s terrible. And all you can do is look at the heavens sometimes and say, “Where is God in all of this?”

He is there in the darkest places. He sees the evil of the world. He feels it. It hurts Him when His people hurt.

Why doesn’t He act? He does. He did. He will. God sent His Son to save those children. Jesus came to take upon Himself all the evil in the world—the sin you do, sin’s consequences in your life, the evil done to you, and all the bad in your world. In His suffering, death, and resurrection He made it good. He works things out for you.

You may not see it work out in this life. You may not even be able to fathom how much painful hurt could be used for good, ever, But God in Christ is better at being God than you are. He works all things out for good. He’s God. That’s in His job description!

Those children died for the One who would grow up and die for all. He died for them just as much as He died for you!

One day, you will stand before Him and you’ll also see these little kids around the throne. Their crowns may not fit. But you won’t miss them because God didn’t miss them.

He hasn’t missed you, either! He has you in His nail scars. You will see all the good that He has worked in your life from the evils you endured. Your accidents weren’t accidents. Your failures and pain weren’t without good. He turns it all good. He used them to save you in His Cross. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Friday of the Second Week in Advent
December 13, 2019

Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 29:15—30:14; Revelation 1:1-20

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. It’s Friday the thirteenth, and you have nothing to fear. Nothing to worry about with the number 13. Nothing to fret about from the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh.

Jesus is God. There is no other. He was in the beginning. He took on your flesh on Christmas. He lived His life perfectly for you. He died the death that you deserve for your sins. He rose on Easter—the prototype of all those who like you are baptized into Christ: You will rise from the dead to life eternal as surely as He has risen from the dead!

The devil can’t harm you. He’s already been defeated by Jesus’ Good Friday for you. The world can’t wreck your joy and faith. You’ve already overcome the world by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of His testimony.

Your faith rests on Jesus. If faith and salvation rested on you at all, they would only be as sure as you are sure! Instead, God has taken everything about Christianity and made it all about Jesus! In Jesus, eternal life isn’t a possibility or something to work toward. You don’t have to worry about “making it to heaven” in Christ. Your salvation and faith are as sure as Jesus risen from dead.

Jesus is the Father’s Son. You are a child of God in Him. God is Jesus’ God. In Jesus, God is your God. Jesus lives, so you will live. Jesus reigns, so you will reign.

On the Last Day the same Jesus who was and is, will come again to take you from this veil of tears to be with Him forever. On that most glorious day, the reality of His Calvary and Easter love for you will no longer be by faith alone. It will be visible to all. You will see Him. But most importantly, you will see His scars! As long as Jesus is alive with those scars, you will have eternal life.

You are one who has washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. You aren’t a thirteen, you’re a Twelve! The number of the Church is your number! On the Last Day, you’ll be joined by twelve times twelve—every saint for all time—all because of Jesus, who was, is, and is to come. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. - Rev. George Borghardt

Those dear tokens of His passion Still His dazzling body bears, Cause of endless exultation to His ransomed worshipers. With what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture, gaze we on those glorious scars! (Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending, LSB 336:3)
St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
December 27, 2019

Today’s Reading: John 21:20-25
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 51:17-52:12; Matthew 2:1-12

There are many other things which Jesus did. Were everyone one of them written, I think the world itself could not contain the books that would be written (John 21:25)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The Gospels are God-breathed eyewitness testimony of what Jesus did and said in achieving your salvation. The Lord called His men for the delivery of His salvation. He sent them to preach and teach. The evangelists also wrote what Jesus did—those are the Gospels!

We don’t have everything that Jesus did. We don’t know all that He did while growing up. We don’t know if He had to remake tables with his stepdad Joseph because they had one leg wrong. We don’t know if he parted his bath water or turned water in to wine at a high school party.

We don’t need to know those things! They might have happened or not. It doesn’t matter. God didn’t tell us because it isn’t necessary for us to know everything there is to know about the life of Jesus.

What the Holy Spirit delivered to us through the pen of the apostles was written for one specific reason: that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ and by believing have life in His Name! God wants to deliver to you what Jesus did in the winning of your salvation. He wants you to receive it—the Law which kills you and the Gospel which brings you life. He wants to save you.

So every word, every phrase, every sentence in the Gospel is for you to believe in Jesus. The Gospel delivers what Jesus did. Nothing is unimportant or untrue in the Gospels! If it’s in there, God wants you to know that it not only actually happened but that it actually happened for you. He wants you to receive His Word and be comforted.

That’s how you should read the Scriptures! You should read them like they were written! If the Holy Spirit recorded what Jesus did to save you then you should look in the Scriptures for just that. Read the Gospels asking yourself, “What’s Jesus doing for me? What’s He saying to me? What’s He want me to repent of? How’s He trying to comfort me? In His forgiveness, how can I love and serve others?”

For God has delivered to you the salvation won by Jesus’ holy life and bitter sufferings and death. Study every Word. Read it. Mark it. Inwardly digest it! He’s given those words so that you would believe, Jesus wants to save you. Merry Christmas! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

-Rev. George Borghardt
St. Stephen, Martyr
December 26, 2019

Today's Reading: Acts 6:8-7:2, 51-60
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 49:22-26; 50:4-51:8, 12-16; Matthew 1:18-25

And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” and falling to his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And having said this, he fell asleep,” (Acts 7:59-60)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Yesterday the Lord celebrated His birth in our midst. We sang happy hymns, We received the Word made flesh in our ears. It was a Merry Christmas!

Today is the Feast of St. Stephen. You might remember him from the old carol that speaks of Good King Wenceslas looking out on the Feast of Stephen. But Stephen actually is more important than just an early church trivia question. St. Stephen is the first martyr of the Church.

Today, the Lord brings you back to reality by telling you about St. Stephen. This young man was ordained a deacon with six other Greeks to make sure that the Greek widow shut-ins were brought the Lord’s Supper. Stephen was immediately in trouble. The Jews slandered him and stirred up the people against him. They dragged him in front of the Voters Meeting. How dare he preach that Jesus saved you! He must be silenced!

None of it fazed him, though. His face is described like the face of an angel as He confesses Jesus to be the God of the Old Testament and the Christ come to save them, you, and all. Then Stephen, whose name means “crown,” was crowned with the stones that ultimately killed him. And as the last shots came, he had only the Lord’s words on his lips and forgiveness for all.

Consider this: the morning after celebrating the Lord’s birth, the Lord gives you a cold cup of reality! The Christian life isn’t always decorations and happiness. You will suffer for His Name. You will doubt. You will despair. People will do evil things to you.

Follow Pastor Stephen’s witness! Look at Jesus, born for you, who suffered for you, died for you, and rose for you. He sits at the right hand of God today. Nothing will separate you from Him. Your salvation is as sure as Jesus.

On that most glorious day, you’ll see a young man wearing white, The Church has traditionally given him the title “archdeacon.” You will spot him standing next to the Lamb. Will he be holding stones? They were a gift to him. Your struggles will be a gift to you, too, in Jesus. Today, you suffer. Tomorrow, you’ll shine. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

The Third Sunday in Advent
December 15, 2019

Today's Reading: Matthew 11:2-11

And John hearing in prison the works of the Christ, He sent through His disciples and said to Him, “Are you the Coming One or should we look for another?” (Matthew 11:2-3)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Is John the Baptist doubting? How can John the Baptist possibly doubt? He saw the Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove! He heard the voice from heaven. God spoke to Him. How could the Baptist doubt?

Wrong question! Focusing on what’s going on with John won’t help you. It'll only lead to despair. If John can doubt, what hope do we have?

Advent isn’t about John the Baptist. John’s going to decrease and Jesus is going to increase. John said that! So, Advent is about where John is pointing you! He sends His disciples to Jesus. He directs you to the Christ, too!

Look at Jesus! Hear His Word! The blind receive their sight. The lame walk again. The lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear. The dead are raised. And we, the poor, have the Gospel preached to us.

John is the greatest prophet born of woman. No matter what is up with Him, no matter how bad His life might get, or how dark and lonely his prison cell is, he still points you to Jesus. He sends His disciples there. He sends us to Jesus.

The question isn’t whether John is doubting, the question is whether you and I have doubts. The place to go with them isn’t inside ourselves. We don’t have to work them out on our own or pull up the bootstraps of our faith and tough it out. Our doubts go to the same place where the Baptist directs us: to Jesus.

Christianity isn’t about having faith, having enough faith, having enough change to make it to heaven. That’s all about you. Faith holds fast to Christ. It trusts in Him and Him alone. It has no other trust or confidence except in Jesus’ holy life and bitter sufferings and death.

Jesus is the Coming One. He’s the One who lived His life doubt-free and counted that doubt-free life as your doubt-free life. He then took upon Himself your doubts. In Him, you have life. In Him, you are going to heaven. In Him, no matter what else is going on or how lonely you may be, you have His salvation.

Jesus is the Coming One. You have no need to look anywhere else. John points you there from prison. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt
Monday of the Third Week in Advent

December 16, 2019

Today's Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 32:1-20; Revelation 4:1-11

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak to the hearts of Jerusalem and call to her that her warfare is ended and her iniquity has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. (Isaiah 40:1-2)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christianity is about the comfort of troubled consciences. It's about God's telling your heart that it's actually going to be okay. It's about God's ending your war with Him. It's about God's paying back double for all your sins.

All the religions of the world are about your doing something for the divine. You change. You get better. You fix yourself. You give your life. You submit. You become one with something greater.

Jesus comes to give comfort—double comfort. He comes to give peace with God and peace with those around you. He comes to pay for your iniquity with His holy life. He comes to give you double pardon by His innocent sufferings and death.

Advent is the time to prepare for His comforting you. Repent. Turn from your sins. Change from all the false comforts of this world. Lift up the shameful valleys in your life and lay low the prideful mountains of your world. The Lord is coming! Prepare His Way!

Fixing the valleys and mountains of sin in your life isn't the goal of Christianity. All it is how the Lord prepares the way for His coming. He empties you of all that you would put your trust in, leaving you with no other comfort other than Him.

For in His incarnation, in His taking on your flesh, Jesus has moved heaven and earth to save you. He has endured your valleys and mountains, and by taking them onto Himself has conquered them in His Cross. In His life, He gives you new life in the comfort of the forgiveness of all your sins.

Christianity is about God's comforting you in the sending of His Son. You're going to be better than okay. God is going to make things work out for your good. In Jesus' Cross, He's paid double for all your sins. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Gaudete)

The Nativity of Our Lord

December 25, 2019

Today's Reading: Luke 2:1-20
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 49:1-18; Matthew 1:1-17

And she gave birth to her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in manger because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7)

Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. It's time to throw out the rule book for God. Toss it! God at Christmas changes everything! He rewrites the rules.

God has a birthday. He is born. That's just not possible! God, who is eternal and has no beginning and no end, can't be born. Yet Christmas is the celebration that our God, the only God there is, was born of the virgin. What a miracle!

God doesn't sleep. God doesn't eat. Throw those rules out! Jesus is sleeping in the arms of the virgin. She feeds Him. What kind of religion has God sleeping in the arms of His mother and being fed? The true one!

Don't say, “That's not God, that's Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes.” No! Today you confess in the Nicene Creed that Jesus is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.” All of God, every bit of God, the fullness of the Godhead, is born today. That's God sleeping in a food trough where dumb animals eat.

It gets worse. We do awful things to God. He will be betrayed into the hands of sinners. He will sweat. He will be tired. He will bleed. We will beat Him to near death. We will take the curse of God—thorns and thistles—and crown God Himself with them. We will mock God as we strike Him with a reed over and over again. And finally, on Good Friday, we will drive nails into God's hands and feet and lift Him naked up from the earth. Cursed is anyone—cursed is God—as He hangs on the Tree. Then, the God who cannot die, dies for you. God dies for you.

This is why Jesus came! He came to rework the God rules and on every single page of the rule book are the simple words, “For you.” For you, God is born. For you, God lives. For you, God suffers. For you, God is crucified. For you, for your salvation, to save you, God dies. You are saved. Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Most merciful God, You gave Your eternal Word to become incarnate of the pure Virgin. Grant Your people grace to put away fleshly lusts, that they may be ready for Your visitation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Christmas Day)
**Christmas Eve**  
December 24, 2019

**Today’s Reading:** Isaiah 7:10-14  
**Daily Lectionary:** Isaiah 44:21-45:13, 20-25; Revelation 12:1-17

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give to you a sign: Behold the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall be called Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

    Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Merry Christmas! Sing it! Pray it! Tell your parents! Tell your friends! Tell your sweetheart! God has come! He has acted! The Virgin is with Child!
    People think that God is up there and you are down here. He’s on some mountain or beyond the clouds. Maybe if you go to Him, you can talk with Him. Unfortunately, the more you try, the more you fail.
    But tonight, God is not way up in the sky! He’s not on some far away mountain. He’s not distant. He’s not far away. No, tonight God is in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. God has advented to save you.
    God is with us! Isaiah even calls Him that! Immanuel means, “God with us.” God is now where you are tonight. He’s one of us, for us, like us, in that He is born for us, to live for us, and to save us from us.
    That’s what tonight is really about! Peel away all the decorations and red and the green. The snow, snow men, the tree, and the star on the top—all of it points to the virgin’s having a Son to save you.
    God takes on your flesh tonight. He is born like you but without sin. God is His Father, meaning He is true God, without sin. Mary is His mother, meaning He’s one of us. In His divinity, He will take on the sins of all the world. In His Humanity, He will die for all of us.
    Do you think God is far? Do you feel alone? Know this: God has come in the flesh to save you. God is so with you, so for you, that He became like you in every way, to suffer like you suffer, to take your sin and your death, so that you would have life everlasting.
    God is not far. He’s not even in a manger in Bethlehem on this Silent Night. No, He’s in the Word of forgiveness. He’s in the waters of your Baptism. He’s in the Body and Blood of His Son given for you. Take eat His forgiveness. Take drink, His salvation. Live forever.
    Merry Christmas! Sing it! Pray it! Tell your parents! Tell your friends! Tell your sweetheart! God has come! He has acted! The Virgin is with child! You are saved! Merry Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.  
-Rev. George Borghardt

**Oh that birth forever blessed. When the virgin, full of grace, By the Holy Ghost conceiving, Bore the Savior of our race, And the babe, the world’s Redeemer, First revealed His sacred face Evermore and evermore. (Of the Father’s Love Begotten, LSB 384:2)**

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**Tuesday of the Third Week in Advent**  
December 17, 2019

**Today’s Reading:** 1 Corinthians 4:1-5  
**Daily Lectionary:** Isaiah 33:1-24; Revelation 5:1-14

But with me it is a trivial thing that I should be judged by you or by human judgment. But I don’t judge myself. (1 Corinthians 4:3-4)

    In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God Himself is coming to save you. He’s coming to take on your flesh. He will be born of the Virgin Mary, born under the Law that you are born under, to buy you back from the Law that always accuses you.
    You are righteous in Him. You are holy. In the forgiveness of sins achieved by Jesus on the Cross, you have eternal life. No one can take your righteousness away from you. They can’t impeach it. They can’t convict you before God. Satan can’t even accuse you again in Christ.
    No, God’s final judgment for you is the One who comes at Christmas hanging dead on the Tree. There God took out all His judgment due the world upon His own Son. On Calvary, Jesus became your sins. On Golgatha, He died not only for the world but specifically for you.
    You aren’t what anyone or anything says you are—not your sins, not your friends, not your enemies, not even the devil himself. Your conscience can’t even condemn you! God is greater than your conscience! Your worth is found in the suffering and death of Jesus. God gave up His Son for you. That’s who you are! You are one for whom God gave up His Son.
    This isn’t permission to sin. That’s just dumb! Who, having been set free from the prison of sin and death goes back to live in prison? Not you! Never! That would be just more slavery and death! You used to be held in chains. Now you are as alive and free from sin, death, and the devil as your Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross of Christ is your freedom from sin!
    If you think that’s great, here is one better: Jesus set you free from having to judge others. If God doesn’t judge you in Christ, how could you possibly look down on and judge others? You can’t! You won’t! That would be more slavery to sin and death! Nope! Judgment for you ended when God judged His Son on the Cross. You had to leave Christ and be judged yourself in order to look down on others.
    When Jesus comes in glory to judge the living and the dead, He can bring to light all those things which are hidden in darkness. You are in Him. When He comes, you’ll be as He is. You are holy and forgiven now by faith. On that day, you’ll be judged holy and forgiven, as surely as Jesus came on Christmas! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.  
-Rev. George Borghardt
Wednesday of the Third Week in Advent

December 18, 2019

Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 34:1-2, 8-35:10; Revelation 6:1-17

The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent. (The Small Catechism: Office of the Keys)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Dear Penitent, I forgive you all yours sins. Your deep dark sins. I forgive you. For your little bitty sins that can damn you but you don’t think are serious, I forgive you. For the sin that makes you think you are going to go to hell, I forgive you. I forgive you every one of your sins.

I’m not giving you my forgiveness. That would do you no good. I’m delivering to you Jesus’ Calvary-won, tomb-empty, Easter-resurrection forgiveness. Forgiveness that was won on the Cross. He was crucified for your sins. Forgiveness resting on His resurrection from the dead. He was raised for your forgiveness.

I’m just a man. I’m a man called by Christ to speak His forgiveness to you—His Word delivered off my tongue. The power behind His forgiveness isn’t me at all, but Jesus and His Gospel.

His Absolution is the very voice of the Gospel. If the Gospel had a sound, if it had a voice, it would be the three little words which enliven faith and eternal life: I forgive you.

I won’t ever reveal your sins. I made a vow. I’ll go to jail before I even say that we talked. I won’t tell your parents. I won’t tell your spouse. I won’t tell the police. Your sins will go into the grave of my ears and out of my mouth will come the voice of the Gospel: I forgive you.

I won’t think less of you for coming to Confession. Don’t worry. I know you are an awful person. I know you are capable of committing all sins. I know this because of the Word of God. Even though I live each day thinking you walk on water in Jesus, I know from God’s Word that you are a sinner. After you confess to me, I’ll just say, “I forgive you.” After, you’ll be free of your sins.

If you sin again, come see me again. I’ll forgive you more times than you have sins. In His forgiveness you’ll find the life to give up these sins. In His Word, you’ll find the Law that shows you more sins to confess. Your life in Christ will be confessing and forgiving.

You don’t have to come see me. I’m cool with that. Confess to God. But when things get bad and you look up and think for sure you’re in trouble with God. I’ll be there to place my stole on your forehead and say, “I forgive you.” And Jesus will forgive you. In Christ, Your Pastor. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.—Rev. George Borghardt

Monday of the Fourth Week in Advent

December 23, 2019

Today’s Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-19

Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 43:25-44:20; Revelation 11:1-19

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command Him. (Deuteronomy 18:18)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. If you want to know God, listen to Jesus. Jesus speaks the Father’s Word. He points you to the Father. He shows you the Father.

How is God toward you? He sent His Son to take upon your flesh on Christmas. Jesus came to live as the Father requires of you and to suffer the punishment due you. Then, on the Third Day, after His Son had accomplished your salvation on Good Friday, God raised His Son from the dead.

God is everywhere. You can see Him in creation. The heavens declare His glory. The mountains reflect His greatness. It’s undeniable that God had a hand in the cosmos. But God’s being everywhere doesn’t save you. God is for you in the giving up of His Son!

No matter what else is true of you, no matter what else is going on, no matter what the world throws at you, you see in Jesus that God is for you. Can cancer rob you from God’s love for you? Can failure snatch away God’s favor on you? Can defeat?

No! No one is going to rob you of God’s love! You can’t even mess it up! Despite how good or bad you are, God loves you despite you, in the giving up of His Son, The Cross is how God is for you. The resurrection is what God has planned for you! “For He was crucified for your sins, but He was raised for your justification” (Romans 4:25).

Jesus is the prophet like Moses, who has come to you deliver to you the Father’s words. He’s like Moses, like you, and like me, only without sin. His coming in the manger is to take our sins away. His coming on the Last Day in the clouds is to make real the forgiveness that He has given to us by faith. When He appears, we will be like Him!

Jesus shows us this week how to prepare for Christmas! Put on the Father’s love for you in Christ. Sprinkle it on others. Mistletoe those who are in need with mercy. Let it snow righteousness and forgiveness from Him to you and from you to others! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.—Rev. George Borghardt

O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear! Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel (O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, LSB 357:1)
The Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 22, 2019

Today's Reading: John 1:19-28

He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." (John 1:20)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. It’s so close! It’s so close to Christmas! Jesus is coming! Christmas is almost here!

Today the Lord gives us more John the Baptist. John is asked who he is. He’s not Christ. He’s not the coming One. In fact, He won’t talk about who he is at all, but instead points them to the One coming after him. He points you to Jesus.

John came to make you ready for Christmas. He’s the forerunner. He tilled the soil. He preached. He baptized with water. He filled the deep valleys of the lives of sinners with forgiveness. He knocked the mountains of pride down with the Lord’s judgment. He made everything white with forgiveness before the Lord! He’s the voice that cries out in the wilderness for us to get ready for Christmas! Get ready for Christmas! Jesus is almost here!

To save you—that’s why the Lord is coming in the manger on Christmas. He’s coming to bring you glad tidings of great joy! He’s coming to bring Joy to the World. He’s in that manger to give you a holy night. He’s coming to save you!

Don’t miss this Gospel as you prepare for Christmas this week! Don’t get lost in the presents, the colors, the trees, and the lights. These last days of Advent are about Jesus coming. The manger scene is good news because the Baby in there is going to die. The angels are singing because that baby is going to die. Everything about Christmas is done by Jesus to save you.

Jesus is coming! He’s where John the Baptist is pointing you by his confession, “I am not the Christ.” The Lord is near. He’s coming in the manger on Christmas. He’s coming in the clouds on the Last Day. He’s coming in the Lord’s Gifts this morning. He’s got forgiveness and comfort. He’s coming to save! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Advent)

Thursday of the Third Week in Advent
December 19, 2019

Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 40:1-17; Revelation 7:1-17

And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14a)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The saints are coming! They are marching in! They are adventing through the ordeals and tribulations of this life. They wear white blood-stained robes. Robes washed in the forgiveness of sins won by the Lamb.

There will be an end to these present sufferings. There will be a time in which you aren’t misunderstood. People you love won’t hurt you. No one will let you down. You won’t lose, ever. There will be no more hurt, and pain. Best of all—there will be no more death.

God saved them. They stand before His throne forgiven, receiving from Him, serving Him, day and night in His temple. He shelters them. He gives them life eternal, free from hunger and thirst and longing for righteousness and holiness.

You are His saints, His holy ones. Your robes were washed with the Lamb’s blood at the baptismal font. You have heard His life-giving Gospel. You have eaten at the marriage feast of the Lamb. Faith receives Jesus’ Cross and resurrection in the Word, and you are saved.

You will be those standing in front of the Lamb on the Last Day. You are one of His saints now by faith. Your faith is so true, it is so certain, that you are already in white robes. For the reality of Christ’s salvation makes your future your present.


By faith, you are righteous. By faith, you are holy. By faith, you are working out your salvation daily by confessing your sins and receiving forgiveness. By faith, you are saved. By faith, you are in heaven already.

He will come again in the clouds of heaven with all His hosts. You will see Him with your own eyes. On that most glorious day when He comes to save you from this awful world, there will be no more need to believe that things are going to get better. You will see it. You will no longer need to pray and long for holiness: You will be robed in white as He is in white. God will be your God and your Father as surely as He is the Lamb’s God and Father. The saints will come. You will be with them. We will always and every day be with the Lord. It’s going to happen on the Last Day. It’s true by faith today. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt
Friday of the Third Week in Advent  
December 20, 2019

Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 40:18-41:10; Revelation 8:1-13

But those who wait for the Lord will renew their strength; they will go up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired; they will walk and not get weary. (Isaiah 40:31)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Ever get exhausted? It’s not that you’ve walked or run too far. I’m talking about mentally, emotionally, and spiritually spent, as if your religion tank is on empty, with nothing left.


Am I addicted to sin? It’s killing me. Like an itch that I can’t stop scratching, the more I give in the more I die a little inside. Shouldn’t I be better? I’m a Christian. Shouldn’t things be better for me? It just seems that the more I get better, the more I get worse.

Jesus. He’s coming on Christmas to save me. He will take upon all that I am to redeem all that I am so that I would receive by faith all that He is. For my sins, He suffered. For my shame, He is shamed. For my death, He dies.

He rises on the Third Day. I rise with Him in the waters of my Baptism. He’s the only peace in my life. He’s the lone stability. He’s the only strength. I fall, He picks me up. I sin, He washes my stain away. In His word, in His Absolution, in His Body and Blood, I finally feel whole.

This is the Christian life. It’s lived out in confession and forgiveness. I die to my sins daily and He raises me from the dead in His life. I live and love others with the life and love that He earned for me.

I sin. It’s not part of my life in Jesus. It’s part of my death in this world. I’m fallen and don’t live as I should. I’m not giving myself permission to sin, I’m confessing how awful my situation is. It’s so bad and I’m so evil that only Jesus can save me.

Sound familiar? It should. If you are honest with God, you live this life, too. Don’t you? For you there is forgiveness, too. Christ died for your sins, too. He suffered for your successes. He was crucified for your failures. He rose and you live now in Him, forgiven.

In His forgiveness, we are renewed to live another day together. He carries us through the hard times of this life. He is our strength, our rest, our mercy, and most of all our forgiveness, until the Last Day when faith is replaced by sight, and our sin is replaced by his victory. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

St. Thomas, Apostle  
December 21, 2019

Today’s Reading: John 20:24-29

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, also called “Didumos,” was not with them when Jesus came. (John 20:24)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Dead people stay dead. It’s an inescapable truth that all living things live and die and then stay dead. Jesus was dead. That was the end. He was done.

Not Jesus! He rose from the dead. Mary was the first to see Him alive on Easter morning. She ran and told the apostles. They didn’t believe her. Why would they? Dead people stay dead.

Jesus appeared to the disciples on Easter evening. He showed them the scars that achieved their salvation on the cross—His hands and feet. What was the difference between now and when Mary announced to them that Jesus was alive? They believed because they saw the Lord!

Thomas wasn’t there. So they preached to him that they had with their own eyes seen the Lord alive! And just like the apostles didn’t believe Mary, Thomas didn’t believe that Jesus was alive.

Dead people stay dead. It was unbelief. It was a crass rejection of the resurrection. Thomas believed that dead people stay dead more than He believed the words of Jesus.

Thomas had a nickname. Take note of it. He wasn’t called “Tommy” or “Tom.” He was called “Twin.” That means there was someone who looked just like Thomas. He had a twin!

The apostles were Thomas’ twins. They didn’t believe until they saw the Lord. You are Thomas’ twin. When you don’t believe the promise of the Gospel, when you think that you have to answer for your sins on your own, you are Thomas’ twin, too.

You doubt. You despair. You wonder whether God loves you or not. You try and struggle to be better and fail. You fight to do good and fail. You hope, you pray, you cling with all your heart to a truth that you have never seen: Jesus is alive.

Repent of being Thomas’ twin. You’ve heard His Word! Jesus has washed His life on you in Holy Baptism. The truth of the universe is wrong. Dead people don’t stay dead. That is no longer true—since Jesus. Jesus lives. That changes everything!

One day, you will see Jesus alive at the right hand of God, scars and all. Today you believe because you’ve heard the Word preached by the Lord’s apostles in the Word. You don’t have to see Him. Your sins are forgiven because Jesus is alive. He lives! You live forever, too! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt