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A Short Form for Daily Reflection

ADAPTED FROM LUTHER’S SMALL CATECHISM

Make the sign of the Holy Cross and say:

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

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

Read “Today’s Reading” if there is one listed.

Read the Daily Lectionary selections.

Read the Reflection for the Day.

Say the Apostles’ Creed.

Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

Pray one of these little prayers:

(In the Morning)

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

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

(In the Evening)

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

If it is evening, then go to sleep promptly and cheerfully.
Today's Reading: Mark 16:1-8

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. The women who came to the tomb early on Easter morning expected to find a corpse. They expected to anoint the body of Jesus, weep, and then return home in grief. Instead, they heard the messenger tell the Good News. Christ is not dead! He is alive! In response to that great news—they ran away, afraid.

Death is something that all people fear. It is likely that these women had encountered the death of family or friends at some point in their lives. They did not enjoy the finality of death and the sadness of loss but were at least familiar with them. They were brave enough that morning to get up early, get the spices, and head to the tomb. But when they hear the Good News they are shaken with fear and they run.

Perhaps what scared them was not death, but the power to overcome death? For only God could do that. Only the eternal God who created life could overcome death and come back to life. The women knew that Jesus was Lord, but His resurrection brought home to them in a powerful way that to be in His presence is to be in the presence of Yahweh—the great I AM—the eternal God.

So they ran in fear, when in truth they now had no reason to be afraid. What they should have feared was death and the punishment for sin but Christ Jesus had died to forgive sins and destroy the power of death. He rose to give these women peace. The enemy was crushed. Their Lord Jesus is the risen Prince of Peace!

On this Easter Day, rejoice in the truth that Jesus rose to give you peace, too! Don’t be afraid to be in His presence. Come hear His Word at church. Remember your Baptism where He washed you clean and gave you His life. Kneel at His altar and eat and drink His Body and Blood under the bread and wine. Let Him feed you and forgive you and bless you as only He can. Don’t be afraid to come near to Him. He lives to save you and love you. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God the Father, through Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, You have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord’s resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by Your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Collect for the Resurrection of Our Lord)
Today's Reading: Acts 10:34-41

To [Jesus] all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. (Acts 10:43)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. One of the questions often posed to Christians is whether there are ways to be saved other than faith in Jesus. While it is popular in our modern day to believe that there are many ways to God, the witness of Scripture is clear: God has saved the world through Jesus Christ. There is no way to God other than through Jesus, for He alone is Lord.

This is clear in Acts 10. Peter brings the Gospel to Cornelius, a Roman centurion, a Gentile who had learned about God from the Jewish community in his town. But he didn’t know Jesus yet. The Holy Spirit wants Cornelius and his family to know the salvation that Jesus alone can give, so He works in an amazing way to bring Peter and the Gospel of Christ to Cornelius’ home.

In a beautiful sermon, Peter shows that God has saved the world through Jesus. The Father sent Jesus, anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit, raised Jesus from the dead, gave proof to the apostles, and appointed Jesus to be the judge of the living and the dead. Cornelius knew about the true God, but Peter made it clear that to believe in God is to also believe in Jesus whom He sent. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Cornelius and his family believed in Jesus and were saved.

The Father has poured all of His love for you, all of His strength to save you, all of His mercy to forgive you into Christ Jesus. He promised through the prophets who came before Jesus that He would win forgiveness for you by His death and resurrection. He poured out the Holy Spirit so that from generation to generation after Jesus ascended, the Gospel would be preached and believed and maintained until you could hear it. And when you did hear, the Holy Spirit created faith in you. There is no way for you to be saved other than through Jesus, because God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—has done everything to save you through Jesus alone. Thanks be to God! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Good Christian friends, rejoice and sing! Now is the triumph of our King! To all the world glad news we bring: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! (Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing, LSB 475:1)
As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!”

(Luke 24:36)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. On Easter evening, the disciples cowered in a locked room. Suddenly, Jesus stood in their midst. He spoke to calm their fear. He also gave them three beautiful gifts. First, He gave them peace. They’d been grieving His death and fearing for their safety. Jesus spoke peace to them—the peace He won on the Cross for them.

Second, He gave them proof that He had physically risen from the dead. He invited them to see His hands and feet and to touch His body. Then He ate broiled fish. They’d heard him speak, they’d touched his wounds, and then they even heard him chew! They knew with complete confidence that He was physically alive.

Third, He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He’d spent the past three years teaching them from Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets all the things that must happen to the Messiah: suffering, death, and resurrection. They hadn’t understood before, but it became clear.

Have you ever had one of those moments when you’re hearing a sermon or reading the Word and you understand a Bible passage in a way you didn’t before? Imagine how the apostles felt when Jesus opened their minds to understand ALL the Scriptures. Their joy grew by leaps and bounds!

With these gifts, Jesus sent them out to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations. They would witness to people far and near about how Jesus had risen from the dead and gives eternal life. They’d seen Him alive, touched Him, and had eaten with Him. He lives forevermore.

Their witness still speaks to you today. In the Bible, they still testify to everything they saw Jesus say and do. They saw Him die and they saw Him alive again. They tell you that Jesus died and rose to save you. They speak the truth of Christ and that truth can set you free. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

The foe in triumph shouted when Christ lay in the tomb; But lo, he now is routed, his boast is turned to gloom. For Christ again is free; In glorious victory He who is strong to save Has triumphed o’er the grave.

(Awake, My Heart, with Gladness, LSB 467:2)
Wednesday of Easter Week
APRIL 15, 2020


I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord.

(The Small Catechism: The Creed, Second Article)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. In the Apostles’ Creed you confess that Jesus is your Lord. In John 11, Martha also confessed her faith that Jesus is Lord. By hearing her confession, you can grow stronger in your confession of faith, too.

Jesus often visited the home of three siblings: Lazarus, Martha and Mary. They heard His Word and believed in Him. Jesus loved them all deeply. But one day Lazarus became very sick. His sisters sent a message, praying that Jesus would come quickly and heal their brother. But He didn’t come until after Lazarus had been dead and in the tomb four days.

When He arrived, Martha hurried to meet Him. Even in grief, her faith was strong. She calls Him Lord and confesses faith that God will give Him whatever He asks. Jesus tells her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25, 26)

Do you believe this? Death was all around her, from the sound of mourners weeping in her ears to the smell of her brother’s corpse in her nostrils. Grief and death, the marks of Satan’s cruel lordship, were all around her. But Jesus stood there in front of her. He wanted her to believe He was the true Lord. That He could crush Satan and deliver her and Lazarus and Mary, and all people—that He could defeat death itself.

Martha confessed her faith: “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.” (John 11:27) She trusted Jesus. Jesus delivered her. He is true God and true man. As God He had the power to raise Lazarus from the dead. As man He had the vocal cords to call Lazarus from the tomb. Lazarus rose again as his Lord Jesus called to him and gave him life.

When you confess the Creed, you join Martha in calling Jesus Lord, saying He is true God and true man, who defeated sin, death and Satan for you. Jesus has made you His own. He is not just the Lord, but He is your Lord! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

From God the Father, virgin-born to us the only Son came down; By death the font to consecrate, the faithful to regenerate. (From God the Father, Virgin-Born, LSB 401:1)
Today’s Reading: Job 19:23-37  
Daily Lectionary: Exodus 17:1-16; Hebrews 11:1-29

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.  
(Job 19:25)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The book of Job tells the story of a man whose faith in God was tested through tremendous pain and suffering. In the beginning, Job had it all, but in a short period of time, his children died, his possessions were stolen, and he came down with an excruciating sickness. His friends gave false comfort. Instead of proclaiming God’s mercy, they accused him of doing evil, because they figured anyone suffering like that must have done something terrible.

Job expresses frustration with God and confusion about why he has to suffer. But Job does not lose his faith. He doesn’t understand why he is suffering, but he still professes the faith that one day he will be raised from the dead by his Redeemer. The very body that is wasting away will be made whole. He will see the One who has bought him back from death—Jesus, who saved Him. He longs for that day!

You, too, will see your Redeemer. He is with you through your life. He helps you during joys and sorrows. His forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and care are with you. Your suffering doesn’t always make sense, but in Christ Jesus, God comes near to be with you. He suffered on the Cross to pay for your sins and win you for Himself. You can turn to Christ and know that He loves you—He has proven it on the Cross. Jesus rose from the dead and lives forever. You have been baptized into Him and you believe in Him, so you live with Him. He rose from the dead and He will raise you from the dead, too.

When He takes you from this vale of tears, your soul will be with Him in heaven. On the Last Day of this world He will return, and the resurrection of the dead will take place. Your glorified body will be raised from the dead and reunited with your soul, never to taste death again. When you rise, your dear Jesus who has redeemed you will be there, and like Job confesses, you will see your Savior with your own eyes. Together, we’ll all rejoice in our Savior and sing His praise. He is faithful. He will do it. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

I know that my Redeemer lives; What comfort this sweet sentence gives! He lives, He lives, who once was dead; He lives my ever-living head.  
(I Know That My Redeemer Lives, LSB 461:1)
HIGHER THINGS REFLECTIONS - EASTER 2020

Friday of Easter Week

APRIL 17, 2020

Today’s Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. On the night of the first Passover, each Israelite family gathered together in their homes. They ate a hurried meal of unleavened bread and roasted lamb. The blood of the lamb was painted on the doorpost of their homes. During the night the Angel of Death passed over all the homes in Egypt. In every home where there was no blood on the door, the firstborn was killed. But death passed over each home covered in the blood of the lamb. After this plague upon Egypt, enslaved Israel went free (Exodus 12).

God told Israel that they should continue to observe the Passover each year. For an entire week, they could have no leaven (yeast) in their homes. They could not have it or eat it. During the Passover week, leaven symbolized sin. By removing it, Israel was telling God and one another that they repented of their sin and trusted in God who had delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

In our reading for today Paul teaches us that the Church is Israel. We celebrate Passover continually. For us it is an eternal celebration, for Jesus Christ is the Passover Lamb who was sacrificed to deliver us from sin and death, and rose again to set us free. His blood causes death to pass over us forever. Each time we gather to have Holy Communion, we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ, our Passover Lamb, and rejoice that He has saved us.

What about the leaven? The Church is to live a continual life of repentance. Each time we commune, we humbly confess our sin, hear Jesus’ Absolution, and partake of His Body and Blood. He forgives us, gives us His life, and strengthens us in love. Paul doesn’t mean we literally cannot eat bread with yeast in it. But he does mean that we should not become people who do not care about sin, who live in the ways of the world. For we have been set free from slavery to sin and death by the blood of our Passover Lamb, Jesus. So eat Christ, drink Christ, and live in His freedom. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Then let us feast this Easter Day on Christ, the bread of heaven; The Word of grace has purged away the old and evil leaven. Christ alone our souls will feed; He is our meat and drink indeed; Faith lives upon no other! Alleluia!

(Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands, LSB 458:7)
Saturday of Easter Week

APRIL 18, 2020

Today’s Reading: Introit for the Second Sunday of Easter
(Psalm 81:1, 7a, 10, 16b; antiphon: 1 Peter 2:2a)


Like newborn infants, Alleluia, long for the pure spiritual milk [of the Word.] Alleluia.
(From the Introit for the Second Sunday of Easter)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. At some point in your life, you have probably heard a hungry baby cry. Such strong cries from such a little one! When a baby cries, you can be sure of two things: Parents will respond quickly to feed their child, and what the baby will eat is milk. When those hunger pangs are echoing around the room, loving parents don’t just sit there. They respond. And when they respond, they don’t put a plate of tacos in front of a newborn. They give him milk, because it does a baby good.

Notice that in this verse, you are not asked to put yourself in the place of the parent who feeds the baby. You ARE the baby. You are the one who hungers. You are the one who longs to be fed, but not with milk. As a dear child of God, you cry for His Word. You cry to have Him fill you with the sweet psalms, the hearty works of Moses, the delicious epistles of Paul. You cry to hear the words and works of Jesus, which He said and did for you. For when you have the Word of God, God gives you Himself in that Word. When He speaks of saving you, loving you, protecting you, it is not just words. He has done these things in Christ, and is giving them to you as He speaks of them to you in the Word.

His Word was in your baptismal water, and made you His own child. His Word is spoken over bread and wine, and so Jesus’ Body and Blood are present under it for you for the forgiveness of sins. His Word is in your ears in church, in your mouth as you pray and praise Him, and in your eyes as you read your devotions. His Word brings you cleansing from sin. His Word brings you the righteousness of Christ in which you are dressed. His Word lights your path in life and leads you home. His Word is alive because the Holy Spirit who inspired it, speaks through it, and He gives you Jesus.

Dear friend, be not too full for another meal. Know your hunger. Your Father in heaven is near to feed you the pure milk of the Word. The Spirit will be there to strengthen your faith. Jesus is there to forgive you and give you life. He will give you Himself. God loves you and longs to feed you. So…cry like a baby. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

You satisfy the hungry heart with gift of finest wheat. Come give to us, O saving Lord, the bread of life to eat.
(You Satisfy the Hungry Heart, LSB 641: refrain)
The Second Sunday of Easter

APRIL 19, 2020

Today’s Reading: John 20:19-31

Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”  

(John 20:29)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Easter is a day of beautiful comfort. Jesus was dead and is alive again! Death is defeated and all who believe in Jesus have eternal life! Christ is our Good Shepherd who lives to watch over us and lead us to heaven!

For Thomas, the first Easter was very difficult. He wasn’t with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them that evening. Jesus spoke peace to them, showed them His hands and side where the nails and spear had pierced Him, and He gave them the Holy Spirit. The disciples rejoiced, where before they had been terrified and grief-stricken. When Thomas came back to the room, he was still afraid and grieving. When he’d last seen them, his fellow disciples were sad, too. Now they were celebrating. Thomas would not believe that Jesus lived unless he saw Him with his eyes touched the wounds on Jesus’ hands and side. Can you imagine how the rest of that week went for Thomas? The other disciples were trying to tell him the truth, yet he wouldn’t believe—their joy was offending his grief. But no matter how hard that week was, when Jesus appeared again, Thomas was there with the others. Despite his pain and sadness, he didn’t wander away.

When faith is a struggle and despair is near, remember Thomas. Don’t give up coming to church. Come and hear the Word and wait on Christ. He is faithful to you. Hear Him. Let Him give you peace and forgive your sins. He’ll help you.

On the eighth day, Thomas was there when Jesus appeared. Thomas could touch and see. He rejoiced that Jesus is his Lord and God. Jesus taught Thomas, and all of us, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” You have not seen, but you have heard the eyewitness testimony of those who witnessed Jesus’ resurrection. By the power of the Spirit, you believe that Jesus lives and your sins are forgiven. May Christ comfort you in the peace of His resurrection and strengthen your faith, now and always. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, grant that we who have celebrated the Lord’s resurrection may by Your grace confess in our life and conversation that Jesus is Lord and God; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.  

(Collect for the Second Sunday in Easter)
Johannus Bugenhagen, Pastor

APRIL 20, 2020


And (Jesus) began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

(Luke 4:21)

In the Name T of Jesus. Amen. Johannes Bugenhagen was an important pastor and scholar during the Reformation. He served at the church in Wittenberg. He preached the Gospel and served all the people in his parish, but he is especially well known for the loving pastoral care he gave to Martin Luther.

Bugenhagen preached the word faithfully. Just as Christ Jesus preached the Word faithfully in our reading from Luke 4, so, too, Bugenhagen, sent by Christ, preached faithfully to the people of Wittenberg. He preached salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. In our day, Jesus still sends pastors to boldly proclaim the Gospel. You can hear this Gospel in a parish near you each Sunday.

Bugenhagen heard confession faithfully. He heard Luther's confession and spoke forgiveness to him. This Absolution comforted Luther, strengthened his faith, and sustained him in his work. Perhaps you may wonder what sins Luther had to confess? We do not know. No one does. For Bugenhagen was a faithful pastor and never divulged the sins confessed to him. It was safe to confess to him. It is safe to confess to your pastor today. He will not divulge any secrets. He will simply speak the Gospel that washes away your sin—the Absolution. All people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. You are no different. Don't be afraid to come and find comfort in the Absolution. It is for you.

Bugenhagen was a faithful steward of the Sacraments. Over the course of his ministry, Bugenhagen celebrated the Sacrament and communed people countless times. They came forward and opened their mouths and received the Body and Blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. By God's grace, the Sacrament is still available for you in your day. You can come and partake of Christ, too.

Bugenhagen also was active in works of mercy. After Luther died, his wife Katie and her children endured hard times. They found a safe place to stay with Bugenhagen and his family. The compassion of Christ was not just in the words of this pastor, but also in his actions. Come to a congregation near you and live a life of mercy with all those who have known God's mercy in Jesus! In the Name T of Jesus. Amen.

Saints, see the cloud of witnesses surround us; Their lives of faith encourage and astound us. Hear how the Master praised their faith so fervent; “Well done, My servant!”

(Saints, See the Cloud of Witnesses LSB 667:1)
Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter

APRIL 21, 2020

**Today’s Reading:** Ezekiel 37:1-14  
**Daily Lectionary:** Exodus 23:14-33; Luke 4:31-44

And (the LORD) said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.”

(Ezekiel 37:3)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. When the LORD spoke to Ezekiel in this chapter, the Jews were in captivity in Babylon. They had no strength to go home or to defend themselves. They said about themselves, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.”

But God’s power is unlimited. He created life out of nothing. He can take the dead and raise them again. He could save Israel from captivity. Ezekiel sees a valley filled with dry bones. God asks, “Can these bones live?” Yes! Ezekiel preaches God’s Word to the bones, and they come together, rattling and connecting, sinews and skin covering them. They are whole again, but no breath is in them. Ezekiel preaches the Word of God to the breath and the breath of life comes into them and they rise on their feet, alive, a great army. Israel would come back to life and would go home.

But this vision refers to more than just Israel. Jesus Christ took on flesh in the womb of His mother Mary. He died on the Cross and was laid in the tomb. He rose on the Third Day. His body would not see corruption. He would not turn into dust, as Adam was cursed to do. On the Third Day, He breathed deep, His heart beat, He opened His eyes, stood on His feet and walked out of the tomb. He lives and will never die.

He sent out the apostles to be His witnesses. As they preached His Name, the Spirit worked through their words. Those who were dead in sin were brought to life! They were forgiven, and given new life in Christ. They came alive—a mighty army—not to fight with weapons but to walk in faith and serve in love. In Baptism, you, too, came to life and are part of this glorious band of believers, walking with Christ in faith.

On the Last Day Jesus will come again. He will call to us and we will hear His voice with our ears and rise from the dead. Our bones will be rejoined, our flesh resurrected and glorified: our hearts beating, our brains thinking, our voices praising Christ our Lord. And the Lord will bring us to the Promised Land of Heaven, and there we will be free, forever, in Him. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

*O, where is your sting, death? We fear you no more; Christ rose, and now open is fair Eden's door. For all our transgressions His blood does atone; Redeemed and forgiven, we now are His own. (He's Risen, He's Risen LSB 480:4)*
APRIL 22, 2020


…who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

(The Small Catechism: The Creed, Second Article)

In the Name ☧ of Jesus. Amen. In the Apostles’ Creed you confess that Jesus is your Lord. In John 20, Mary Magdalene also confessed her faith in Christ. When you hear her confession, you grow stronger in your confession of faith, too.

Mary had been possessed by seven demons! (Luke 8:2) These fallen, wicked angels had been inside her, torturing her day and night. Jesus came and drove them out, setting her free. Before, she’d known only torture, but Jesus gave her peace, forgiveness, and life! He alone had the power to deliver her, for He is God in flesh.

On Easter morning, as Mary walked to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, who could know her fear? Jesus had the power to drive out those demons but now He was dead! How would she find safety now that He was gone? When she got to the tomb, His body was missing. Tears overwhelmed her and she wept—until she heard Him speak the word that let her know He was alive: “Mary” (John 20:16).

When Jesus died on the Cross, He won an eternal victory over Satan, the cruel tyrant who had tortured Mary. Jesus had no sin of His own, so He could pay the price for the sins of those who were guilty under God’s Law. Death could not hold Him. Satan was crushed. Death was destroyed. Mary needed more than a temporary deliverance from seven demons. She needed eternal deliverance from Satan’s power. Jesus alone could give that to her. She went to the disciples, no longer afraid, and confessed with boldness, “I have seen the Lord!” (John 20:18)

When you confess the Creed, you join your confession with that of Mary Magdalene. Just as Jesus kept Mary safe from Satan all her life, He will keep you safe as well. One day He will call you from the grave by name, and you will live forever. In the Name ☧ of Jesus. Amen.

Christ is risen, Christ is living. Dry your tears, be unafraid! Death and darkness could not hold Him, nor the tomb in which He lay. Do not look among the dead for One who lives forever more; Tell the world that Christ is risen, make it known He goes before.

(Christ is Risen, Christ is Living, LSB 479:1)
Thursday of the Second Week of Easter
APRIL 23, 2020

Today’s Reading: 1 John 5:4-10

If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. (1 John 5:9)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. In John 1, God calls to you to be His child. “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12,13). God adopts you to be His child through Baptism, as you are forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son.

The new birth of Baptism changes your life forever in this world and in the next, for when you are God’s child, He forgives your sins, protects and blesses you, and gives you eternal life. Baptism also opens you up to the troubles that the world gives to God’s children. As Christ suffered, so those who are in Him will suffer.

Since becoming His child through Baptism has such serious consequences, God wants you to know that you can trust Him. So He has given you a sure and certain testimony about Jesus. God lays out everything for you in the Scriptures, so that you can know the truth. His testimony is made clear in our reading from 1 John 5.

Look at the witnesses who stand up to tell you the truth about what they heard and saw in Jesus! John the Baptist testifies that Christ, whom he baptized in water, is the Son of God (John 1:32-34). John the apostle was there when Jesus died. He witnessed Jesus’ lifeless body hanging dead on the Cross. He witnessed the soldier pierce His side with a spear, and saw the blood and water (John 19:34-35). These two Johns, along with all the apostles, bear witness to you about Jesus

Even greater than that, the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, testifies through the Word of God. He gives you life in Baptism. He speaks the truth about Jesus in His gifts and witness (John 14:26). God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, who loved the world so much He gave His only begotten Son to save all who believe—He also testifies that He has sent His Son for you (John 8:18).

You can trust this testimony. These are faithful witnesses. You can trust God to be your loving Father, Christ Jesus to be your merciful Savior, and the Holy Spirit to be your Comforter and Helper. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

God loved the world so that He gave His only Son the lost to save, that all who would in Him believe should everlasting life receive.

(God loved the World so that He Gave, LSB 571:1)
Friday of the Second Week of Easter  

APRIL 24, 2020


Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:16)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. In Exodus 25-31, we read that Moses went up Mount Sinai where God gave him instructions for building the Tabernacle, constructing all the items needed for worship and sacrifices, and everything that Aaron and the priesthood would need to fulfill their roles. God was giving very sacred directions to Moses that were to be carried out exactly as He specified.

It must have been a joy for Moses to hear that God had already called certain artisans for this work. “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft” (Exodus 31:2-4).

This reading should be an encouragement to you in Christ Jesus. God has created you and given you unique skills, abilities and interests. God uses you and the gifts that you have in His service—to create beautiful things, to give encouragement to those who are weary, to teach people in the truth, and to praise His Name. Perhaps God could use you to serve as a pastor or teacher, a deaconess or missionary. Perhaps you could serve as a musician or artist or artisan. Perhaps you could serve in fields outside the Church, living as a Christian to help people in their needs. Perhaps your service will be in your home, loving your family, teaching your children to know the Lord.

There are many ways to serve God and His people. Throughout your life, take opportunities to strengthen the gifts God has given you through education and experiences that help you grow. Be diligent in school and work. Don’t be afraid to help at home and in your congregation. Be humble and willing to learn from the people God puts in your life. You’ll learn lessons from people and situations that will stay with you all your life. You are a child of God, forgiven and loved. God give you joy as you serve Him and others in the freedom that Christ Jesus won for you. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

How clear is our vocation, Lord, when once we heed Your call; To live according to Your Word and daily learn, refreshed, restored, that You are Lord of all and will not let us fall. (How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord, LSB 853:4)
Today’s Reading: Mark 16:14-20


The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Mark 1:1)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Paul and Barnabas were about to head out on a second missionary journey. They wanted to revisit the congregations they had planted together. But there was a problem. When they started their first journey, Mark had accompanied them, but he left and returned home during the journey. Barnabas wanted Mark to come again. Paul said he shouldn’t because he abandoned them before (Acts 15:36-41). Their disagreement got so sharp that Paul and Barnabas split up. Paul journeyed with Silas and Barnabas worked with Mark.

Mark made a mistake in leaving the work, but he didn’t give up. He kept trying, living in the forgiveness of Christ and serving again and again in whatever way he could. And Mark did serve again. Not only did he go along with Barnabas, but he also worked with Peter (1 Peter 5:13), and he would eventually work with Paul again (Colossians 4:10, Philemon 24, 2 Timothy 4:11). He is best known for writing the Gospel of Mark. He wasn’t an eyewitness of what he wrote, but tradition tells us that Mark wrote down Peter’s account of what Jesus had said and done. Tradition also reports that Mark founded the church in Alexandria, served as bishop, and was martyred there.

As a Christian, God gives you vocations, different roles in your life in which you can serve others. At times you’ll do well in those vocations; at other times you’ll make mistakes. It’s important to hear the forgiveness of Jesus for you in times of mistakes. He forgives you, teaches you and strengthens you so that you can continue on in love. (Private confession and Absolution with your pastor can often help when you go through times like that.)

Mark is a good example of a servant of Christ who did not give up after a mistake. He continued onward in faithful service and gave the Church the gift of the Gospel. We thank God for all that He did in and through Mark. May God continue to strengthen us in faith in Christ and in loving service to one another. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

For Mark, O Lord, we praise You, the weak by grace made strong, whose labors and whose Gospel enrich our triumph song. May we, in all our weakness, reflect Your servant life and follow in your footsteps, enduring cross and strife.

(By All Your Saints in Warfare, LSB 518:15)
The Third Sunday of Easter

APRIL 26, 2020

Today's Reading: John 10:11-16

(John 10:14-15)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. In John 9, Jesus meets a little lamb who has no shepherd. He was a man who had been born blind. Jesus gave this lamb his sight in a miracle so amazing it showed proof to all the people that He is the Messiah. But that amazing miracle got the lamb in trouble. The hired hands (who were supposed to be shepherds) asked the lamb what he thought about Jesus. The lamb confessed faith in the One who had opened his eyes, and the hired hands, the Pharisees, kicked him out of the flock. The lamb was no longer welcome! Who would care for him now? Thankfully Jesus had not only given the lamb physical eyes that could see, but had opened his heart to believe as well. The lamb would not be alone. Jesus came to the lamb and took him into His flock. The lamb confessed faith in Jesus, and he has been safe with the Good Shepherd ever since.

In John 10, Jesus talks about the way that the little lambs whom He had come to save were being mistreated by the hired hands who were supposed to look after them. In contrast, Jesus proclaims, “I AM the Good Shepherd.” When the wolf (Satan) comes to attack the lambs, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life to rescue them. He is the Good Shepherd who rose again to protect His flock through this dangerous world until they are safe in heaven.

You also hear the voice of your Good Shepherd. He speaks clearly to you in His Word. He laid down His life to rescue you. He rose to protect you. He seeks after you when you stray. He carries you in His arms when you are weary. He speaks in the Scriptures to calm your heart and give you peace when you are scared. He feeds you with His Supper when you are hungry. He gives you the quiet waters of Baptism. Jesus is your living Good Shepherd, and you are His beloved lamb. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

O God, through the humiliation of Your Son You raised up the fallen world. Grant to Your faithful people, rescued from the peril of everlasting death, perpetual gladness and eternal joys; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

(Collect for the Third Sunday of Easter)
Today’s Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16

“For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out.” (Ezekiel 34:11)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. God loves His people and sends them shepherds, people who are tasked with caring for them. In the Old Testament these were prophets, priests, and kings. Each had a role: to teach the Israelites God’s Word, correct them when they strayed, and protect them from their enemies. Unfortunately, they didn’t do their jobs. Instead of serving the people, they neglected and abused them. God judged them, saying, “The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them” (Ezekiel 34:4).

The shepherds had not done their jobs, but God would not allow their failure to be the final word. A good shepherd was needed. One who would be completely faithful, who would seek out the lost and save them and bring them home. Who could do this work? God would not give it to anyone else, but He Himself would be the Good Shepherd of Israel. He would bear the office of Prophet, Priest, and King. He would speak the truth in love to the people. He would offer the sacrifice of His own body and blood to pay for the sins of the people. He would defeat the great enemies of the people: sin, death, and hell.

In order to do this, He had to become human. The Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, became man. He worked tirelessly to serve the little sheep of God’s flock. He laid down His life to save them from the wolf (Satan). He rose from the dead, having paid for the sins of the world, and He lives to continue being the Good Shepherd. He assures that the Word is preached and the Sacraments given by His under shepherds. He causes His word to be shared by His people around the world. He works mercy to the needy through the hands of His beloved children. Our risen Lord Jesus is still the Good Shepherd, working through His people in their vocations to serve… you!

In Baptism, you become one of His beloved children, His little lamb. He calls to you, finds you, cleanses you, and cares for you. Jesus would not have you be lost or alone. He comes to you and stays with you. You can trust Him. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

The King of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never; I nothing lack if I am His and He is mine forever. (The King of Love My Shepherd Is, LSB 709:1)
Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter

APRIL 28, 2020

Today’s Reading: 1 Peter 2:21-25

For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. In this chapter, Peter is writing to Gentiles who have been converted to Christ. He is teaching them how to live in this world as sojourners and exiles. Their true home is heaven, where Christ will take them at the right time. But until then they are learning to live in faith and love. That can be a true challenge!

One group in the church who knew that challenge well were the servants. In that day servants were more like slaves. They did not have freedom to get up and leave their jobs if they wanted to. Many servants had become Christian and rejoiced in their freedom in the Lord. But their new freedom in Christ contrasted with their ongoing servitude. It was especially hard for servants who served unjust masters, who would beat them. What were these suffering servants supposed to do? Peter tells them to treat their masters with respect even when they suffer unjustly at their hands. Wow! That is hard to do!

Since that is so hard, Peter shares beautiful Gospel with those servants who are suffering. He reminds them of Christ, the Suffering Servant who was prophesied in Isaiah 53. There we hear that Jesus would be a servant to all and suffer terribly in his Passion. He was innocent and yet they tortured and crucified Him. He did not insult those who did it. He bore it patiently in order to save these servants to whom Peter writes—in order to save us all. Jesus now lives as their Shepherd. He looks after them. When they suffer, He knows, and can help. When they suffer unjustly, yet find that the love of Christ is still there for them, they come to understand and treasure His love all the more.

Christ is your Shepherd, too. He has brought you back to Himself and paid for your sins by His death. He lives to care for you and keep you in His grace. In your life, times will come when you suffer unjustly for your faith, but Jesus will be there for you. His Word will comfort you. His gifts in the Sacraments will sustain you. That is why it is so important to regularly hear His Word and receive His gifts, for they strengthen you now for what might come later. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus, lead Thou on till our rest is won; and although the way be cheerless, we will follow calm and fearless, guide us by Thy hand to our fatherland.

(Jesus, Lead Thou On, LSB 718:1)
Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter

APRIL 29. 2020


…that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

(The Small Catechism: The Creed, Second Article)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. In the Apostles’ Creed you confess that Jesus is your Lord. In John 20 the apostle Thomas also confessed his faith that Jesus is Lord. By hearing his confession, you can grow stronger in your confession of faith, too.

Thomas knew Jesus had died. He could not believe Jesus had risen from the dead. Though the other apostles told him repeatedly that Jesus was alive, Thomas was stubborn in his belief that Jesus was dead. “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe” (John 20:25).

Jesus had mercy on Thomas. Eight days later He came again and showed Himself alive to all the apostles. This time Thomas saw Jesus, touched the marks where the nails and spear had pierced His body. Now the command of Christ pierced Thomas faithlessness: “Do not disbelieve but believe.” Thomas confessed to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28) Now that Thomas believed Jesus had died and risen for him. The victory on the Cross was his, too. His sins were forgiven and he is righteous. The blood of Christ washed him and he is innocent. The peace of Christ was given to him and he is blessed.

When you confess the Creed, you join your confession with Thomas’. You tell Jesus and the world that even though you have not seen Jesus, you believe He is your Lord and God! The Spirit creates this faith in you. And throughout your life the Spirit continues to declare you righteous, innocent of sin, and He pours into you the blessings your Lord Jesus won for you on the Cross. The Word and Sacraments are treasure chests, filled to overflowing with the blessings of Christ. Hear and believe, taste and see, your Lord Jesus is good. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

May we, O God, by grace believe and thus the risen Christ receive, Whose raw imprinted palms reached out, and beckoned Thomas from his doubt.

(These Things Did Thomas Count as Real, LSB 472:4)
Thursday of the Third Week of Easter

APRIL 30, 2020


As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. (Luke 8:15)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. When Jesus taught the crowds that followed Him, He sometimes spoke using parables. Those who heard didn’t always understand His meaning. His own disciples often didn’t but they had the chance to ask for an explanation later. Jesus intended for the disciples to go and preach His Word to towns, villages, and even around the world. The crowds didn’t get an explanation right away, but whomever had ears to hear would get one in the Word later.

When Jesus told that parable of the Sower, only the disciples got the extra explanation. But take heart: When you read Luke 8, you get to hear it, too, through the disciples’ teaching. That means that you are reading this because you are a disciple of Christ, too, learning at His feet through the witness of those He sent. So what do you learn? The Sower sows the Word of God, the Good News of salvation through faith in Christ. There are four kinds of soil, representing four kinds of people who hear. In the parable, no one can control the kind of soil they are as the seed lands on them. But for you today, each provides a warning of the challenges that come to a disciple, so you can hear, pray for help, and trust in Christ to save you.

As a disciple, you pray for the lost ones who hear but don’t believe and have the seed snatched away by the devil. Lord, have mercy and bring them to You! As a disciple you are warned of the danger of having shallow roots in the Word of God, by which you hear, are fed, and grow. So, you come to hear the Word at church and receive the gifts of Christ in the Sacrament. You are warned about the thorns that can grow and choke out faith. So, you pray for help when you are tempted, that you not be led astray by the distractions of the world. And as you long to have your faith come to a bountiful harvest in heaven, you pray that as the Spirit has caused you to hear and believe, you would “hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15).

Jesus has sown the Word in you by Baptism, the Supper, preaching and teaching. He will bring a good harvest through these means. Lord Jesus, thank you! Make it so in me and in all who hear! Amen. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Preach you the Word and plant it home And never faint; the Harvest Lord Who gave the sower seed to sow Will watch and tend His planted Word. (Preach You the Word, LSB 586:6)
Today’s Reading: John 14:1-14

(Jesus said) “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (John 14:25-26)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Today we give thanks to God for Philip and James, apostles chosen by Jesus. He called them, taught them, saved them by His death and resurrection, and then sent them to witness to all nations. We don’t know much about what Phillip and James did after Pentecost Day. Tradition tells us Philip served and died in Phrygia – modern day Turkey. Of James we know even less, except that he was martyred by being sawn in two. (This James was known as James the Less, to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee.)

But wherever they served and whatever they did, we do know something important: The words of Jesus gave them comfort and guidance. They had been with Him for three years watching and learning. Some of what He said they did not quite understand at the time, but on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church. Each day that Philip and James served, the Spirit brought to remembrance all that Jesus had said, and helped them understand it fully, so they could proclaim it clearly. The Holy Spirit inspired the apostles so their words and writings were perfect proclamations of Jesus.

When the time came for them to endure persecution, the Word of Christ gave them peace. His words in our reading today would have given them comfort: “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:1-3). Jesus, who had saved them and sent them, would bring them home. They could trust Him completely. Philip and James help you to know that you can trust Jesus completely, too. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, Your Son revealed Himself to Philip and James and gave them perfect knowledge of everlasting life. Grant us perfectly to know Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the way, the truth, and the life, and steadfastly to walk in the way that leads to eternal life; 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 St. Philip and St. James)
Saturday of the Third Week of Easter

MAY 2, 2020

Today’s Reading: Introit for the Fourth Sunday of Easter
(Psalm 66:3, 5, 8-9; antiphon: v. 1-2)


Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.
(From the Introit for the Fourth Sunday of Easter)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Sometimes a passage from the Bible invites you to imagine that you were standing and watching a particular event that happened in the past. This can be helpful so you remember that it was not just for people long ago, but rather is still providing ongoing blessing for you in your day. This Introit is taken from Psalm 66, and in this psalm you are invited to remember when God delivered Israel from the Egyptians as they crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 14).

Israel passed through the sea on dry ground, but the Egyptian army that wanted to destroy them drowned and died as the waters fell in on them. As Israel stood free on the far banks of the sea, Moses and the people sang a song of praise to God for delivering them. Psalm 66 calls you to realize that you were delivered that day, too. The God who helped them is the same God who still helps you. As a believer in Christ, your songs of praise also ascend to God for delivering Israel that day.

We pray this psalm during Easter, which means we are praising God, not just for delivering Israel at the Red Sea, but even more for saving us when Jesus died and rose again to give us eternal life. Jesus “has kept us among the living and has not let our feet slip.” He died our death on the Cross and rose again so that we would stay among the living eternally. He has not let us slip away into death and hell. We live because He lives.

When you pray Psalm 66, your songs of praise are joyful because you know God has saved you, too—at the Red Sea, and even greater, at the Cross and the empty tomb. You praise God, because your fathers and mothers in faith were not drowned in the Sea, so you, too, escape. You praise God because Christ is risen, and you, too, shall rise. So join with all the earth and sing His praise, for God “is awesome in His deeds to the children of man” (Psalm 66:5). In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Holy God, we praise Thy name; Lord of all, we bow before Thee. All on earth Thy scepter claim, all in heaven above adore Thee. Infinite Thy vast domain, everlasting is Thy reign.
(Holy God, We Praise Thy Name, LSB 940:1)
Today’s Reading: John 16:16-22

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.” (John 16:20)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Jesus warns the disciples one last time. They should have known by now, of course, what was to come. But they were pretty oblivious to what was right in front of them. Sound familiar?

Three weeks on, it is easy to look back and see what Jesus was trying to tell them. It’s always easier to look back afterwards and have the light come on. “Of course He told us this would happen!” But in the moment, ignoring bad news is the easier route. Everything seemed to be going so well, though. There was a triumphal parade into Jerusalem, throngs of people gathering around. Until. Until it all went sideways with the foot washing and then the trip to the Garden of Gethsemane.

“Truly, Truly.” Amen, Amen. With the utmost certainty, I say to you that it’s going to look like the world has come to an end. That’s a familiar feeling, too. Disappointment, humiliation, tragedy. They all tear you up inside. They can destroy you to the point of wailing and weeping. However, all of that sorrow is a passing gust of ill wind for you who are in Christ. For you who have passed through His death with Him in your Baptism. That sorrow will turn into joy on the Last Day as your Lord Christ calls you to Himself in the resurrection to life everlasting in the New Creation.

Until then, though? Does your sorrow weigh heavily on you? Can you not see the end of the trouble? Look to that same Jesus with whom you passed from death to life. Hear His Word proclaimed. Remember your Baptism. Taste and see that the Lord is good as His called and ordained servant places His Body and Blood upon your tongue. Weep and lament now, but trust that the one who promised speaks truth to you. Joy is yours in the Risen Christ. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, You show those in error the light of Your truth so that they may return to the way of righteousness. Grant faithfulness to all who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s Church that they may avoid whatever is contrary to their confession and follow all things as are pleasing to You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.  
(Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter)
Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter

MAY 4, 2020

Today’s Reading: Isaiah 40:25-31

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (Isaiah 40:28)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Omnipotent. Immutable. Omnipresent. Eternal. Omniscient. Big ol’ catechism words that try to explain who your God is. They are nothing less than the words He uses to describe Himself through the prophet Isaiah.

“Comfort, comfort my people,” this chapter begins. Your almighty and ever-living God always approaches His children in love. Sure, that love sometimes looks like wrath and anger and discipline, but it is always love that is first in His mind when He thinks of you.

That’s why He says what He says to you today. God your Father reminds you who He is, so that you remember what He has done for you and your salvation. No matter how your day or week has been, no matter how worn out you are after homework, practice, cleaning your room, dealing with the people who don’t like you, and arguing with your parents that these clothes are not inappropriate, He does not grow weary. He is not clueless about how you feel.

This world does cause you to faint, to be tired of all the nonsense and hoop-jumping you have to do, and you just might be at your wit’s end. But not the LORD, not the everlasting God. He gives you a way to renew your strength, to mount up and soar in joy. Those ways aren’t flashy or cool, but they are powerful and living.

A Word proclaimed. A washing with water. Body and Blood that sustain you. Forgiveness itself spoken into your ears. And regardless of how much strength He gives you in this life, just wait and see what He has prepared in the life of the world to come! Until then, rest in the promises He gives to you and for you—promises of strength and protection, because when you are weak and weary and heavy laden, He is strong. He bears you up because He has made you His own in Jesus. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, God of all grace, govern our hearts that we may never forget Your blessings but steadfastly thank and praise You for all Your goodness in this life until, with all your saints, we praise You eternally in Your heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (Collect for Thanksgiving to God)
Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

MAY 5, 2020

Today’s Reading: 1 Peter 2:11-20

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

(1 Peter 2:16–17)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Sojourners and exiles. Strangers and pilgrims, one of the older translations says. One thing is clear: this broken and dying earth is not your final destination. There is another home prepared for you that the Lord God has set aside for the baptized, you who are washed and sanctified through the blood of Jesus.

That being washed and being made holy has set you apart from the masses. It has re-made you into a person who looks at the world differently, as one who knows there is something bigger, better, and more transcendent behind the veil covering your eyes. But don’t let that go to your head. Don’t get a holier-than-thou attitude about the idea that Christ Himself has a whole New Creation waiting to break into this one and remake it, all for you.

Around you now, the presidential election cycle is in full swing. People are running to the political party of their choice and proclaiming that only their side can save the country! It is tempting to join in the fun. By all means, live out your vocation as a citizen. Be passionate and informed about your beliefs, but do so in love. Honor and respect those in office. Honor and respect those running for office. Speak the truth in love, in an honorable way, that God’s love for you and them in Christ may shine through.

That is what you are given to do as those who are free in the Gospel. You have a heritage of freedom. You are free to live in this world without fear, and that freedom gives you the tremendous ability to love those around you in ways they may never have known, because it is the love of Christ in you that shines like a beacon.

Rejoice in the freedom you have in Christ! Rejoice in the vocation in which He has placed you to love your neighbor. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, grant Your mercy and grace to Your people in their many and various callings. Give them patience, and strengthen them in their Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to their neighbor in Christ’s name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(Collect for Christian Vocation)
Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

MAY 6, 2020


I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. (The Small Catechism: The Creed, Third Article)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. I believe that I cannot believe. Wow. That’s a pretty strong statement. And a seemingly contradictory one, too. But completely true. You were dead in sin. You couldn’t do a single thing to make yourself alive, so why would you think that you could create faith within yourself?

If Jesus can create the universe, raise the dead, cast out demons, heal the blind, and make the lame to walk with His Word, why would you doubt that He can make you alive and create saving faith within you by the Holy Spirit’s calling through that same Gospel? It should be a no-brainer. It should be an easy call. Even so, the faithful still cry out, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” And He does. He sends the Holy Spirit to create faith by working behind the scenes, calling you to life and faith with that same ever-living and all-powerful Word of God that breathed life itself into existence.

He pours out His gifts upon you to strengthen that faith, and provides you a place before His altar to gather and receive those gifts, to be made holy, and to be kept safe in the never-failing arms of your Savior. Remember that. Your Lord always cares for you and gives you the faith to believe His promises. He gives you everything you need to trust in Him. He gives you the forgiveness and salvation that ushers you into the place He has prepared for you.

Satan will try everything to convince you that you are all alone. Don’t worry, your Lord and God has your back, because He bore a cross for you. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit Into ev’ry troubled breast; let us all in Thee inherit; Let us find Thy promised rest. Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be; End of faith, as its beginning, Set our hearts at liberty. (Love Divine, All Loves Excelling, LSB 700:2)

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Romans 10:13–15)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. C.F.W. Walther was sent to preach. He, along with a group of Lutherans, emigrated from Saxony to America to find a home for confessional Lutheranism in the New World. It wasn’t an easy journey, and nothing worked out as planned. Eventually Walther served several congregations in the St. Louis area before becoming the first president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and the first president of the newly formed Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He wrote numerous books and articles, as well as several hymns that American Lutherans still sing.

Through it all, Walther maintained his confession of faith, and saw it as instrumental in proclaiming the Gospel to Lutheran immigrants and to those already in America who would join their ranks. The formation of Concordia Seminary was crucial, for it meant that pastors could be properly trained to preach, and the faithful could hear and believe in the Name of the Lord and be saved. To this day, Walther’s legacy remains, in the continued training of pastors who proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for the forgiveness of sins. His early tenacity in clinging to the confession of faith also remains in the catechesis of our congregations.

Jesus for you. That was Walther’s main concern. The Son of God made man for you and your salvation, the blood of Jesus covering your sin. The death of death in Jesus’ work for you. Your resurrection to life everlasting because of Jesus’ resurrection for you. You call on the Name of the Lord, because in Him you have life, and you have it abundantly, through the work of Jesus for you. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

He’s risen, He’s risen, Christ Jesus the Lord; He opened death’s prison, the incarnate, true Word. Break forth, hosts of heaven, in jubilant song And earth, sea, and mountain their praises prolong. (He’s Risen, He’s Risen, LSB 480:5)
Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter

MAY 8, 2020


And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.                                                                                           (Luke 11:9-10)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. It is easy to fall into the trap, isn’t it? “I asked God for it, why didn’t He answer me? Why didn’t I get what I prayed for?!?” That’s what Jesus is saying here, right? Ask, seek, knock, and all your wildest desires will come true! Or will they? It is easy to forget that there are three answers to prayer: yes, no, and wait. Sometimes, in His infinite wisdom, God the Father will make you wait a while for that which you ask.

So ask continuously, Jesus says. Seek persistently. Knock without ceasing. Come back to your Father in heaven again and again with your needs and desires. It isn’t an accident that just before these words Jesus tells His disciples to pray for daily bread. You need prayer like you need food every day. Prayer for the Christian is just as essential as the air you breathe.

The Lord your God will never fail to answer a prayer prayed in faith. He will never fail to grant those things He wants to give to you. The problem is, it takes a long time to turn the focus of prayer away from me, and what I want, and toward God and neighbor, and what they need. But your Lord is patient. He is always listening, always ready to hear your prayer. It doesn’t matter what your prayer is, He always hears those prayers prayed in faith. He’s always ready to answer.

Thanks be to God that He uses His Holy Word to shape you and teach you that for which you should pray and that which you truly need, which empties you of yourself and opens your hands to receive what He has to give, instead of grasping at what seems so close.

The blood of Jesus covers all of your sin. Your Baptism has washed you clean. The heavy lifting is done. Rest assured that God your Father hears you because of Jesus. He hears and answers you in His time with His grace and peace. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Come, my soul, with ev’ry care, Jesus loves to answer prayer; He Himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore will not turn away.                                       (Come, My Soul, with Every Care, LSB 779:1)
Today’s Reading: Introit for the Fifth Sunday of Easter
(Psalm 98:1b, 3-4; antiphon: v.1a, 2b)


He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

(From the Introit for the Fifth Sunday of Easter)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. You think God doesn’t hear. You think He’s forgotten you. You’re pretty sure, in fact. There’s a deafening silence coming from above when you raise your prayers to God. That’s surely what was going through the minds of Jesus’ disciples over the weekend following His death. How could they go on when everything they knew had been destroyed? How could they do anything else once their every reason for living was gone? But Easter morning changed things. Easter morning changed everything. It is entirely likely that this psalm was in their minds and on their lips when their hearts were burning with joy at the realization that Christ was risen!

So it is for you. God your Father might seem silent. He might seem to be far from your cries and prayers, but He isn’t. He’s never far from your side. He proved that to you in your Baptism, when He clothed you with the very righteousness of Jesus. He is even upon your tongue in the Eucharist, once again reminding you what has been given and shed for you. The Lord has indeed remembered His steadfast love. He shows to the ends of the earth His salvation in His risen Son, and He shows it to you as well. He remembers His steadfast love and faithfulness for you, too, in Jesus.

Like the disciples, you are also given to “make a joyful noise,” and “break forth in joyous song” for what He has done for you. Thanks be to God that He has never forgotten you, never forgotten His steadfast love for you. It is always in His mind when He thinks of you. Rest securely in His hands knowing, with the psalmist, that you can sing these words and your Lord hears them, for He is bearing you up even now. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

All the earth with joy is sounding: Christ has risen from the dead! He, the greater Jonah, bounding From the grave, His three-day bed, Wins the prize: Death’s demise Songs of triumph fill the skies. (All the Earth with Joy Is Sounding, LSB 462:1)
The Fifth Sunday of Easter

MAY 10. 2020

Today’s Reading: John 16:5-15

“He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

(John 16:14–15)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. It is Holy Thursday evening. The Last Supper has been celebrated, and soon they will go to the Garden of Gethsemane. Before they do, Jesus gives His disciples one more word of comfort: the promise of the Holy Spirit.

It might seem strange that Jesus has to go away in order for the Holy Spirit to come, but that’s how God works. He has a plan beyond our knowledge, a way to save His people and spread the Gospel to untold multitudes that can only be fulfilled if Jesus treads this dark path to garden, cross, and tomb. What the Holy Spirit will bring to them is nothing less than the full might and power and strength of the Word of the Living God. Almighty God Himself will declare to these fledgling preachers the fullness of His saving Word through the Holy Spirit. They, in turn, will deliver it to the next generation, and so on.

Down through the centuries, never being diluted or losing its power, the things of Jesus are received by His servants and declared to the next generation of hearers for their comfort, forgiveness, and salvation. This is how you hear of Jesus. Countless generations before have gathered where Jesus promised to be and the Holy Spirit called, gathered, and enlightened. Now, you do the same. You hear the voice of your Good Shepherd declared by the one the Holy Spirit has called to deliver it to you. And in the declaration of those things of God, you receive something greater than anything else on this earth. Into your ears flow the forgiveness of your sins, salvation from sin, death, and the devil, and the life everlasting: the very things Jesus went ahead of you to gain, on that path to His Cross. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what you have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Easter)
Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter
MAY 11, 2020

Today’s Reading: Isaiah 12:1-6

You will say in that day: “I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me.” (Isaiah 12:1)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. The prophet Isaiah really gets to the point, doesn’t he? Right to the heart of everything the Lord God says to His people, and how He acts in their lives. Again and again in the books of Holy Scripture, almighty God is exasperated with His people, angry to the point of destruction, only to be turned at the last moment by a plea for mercy. Abraham does it, so does Moses. The prophets do it over and over again, too. There is a good track record throughout history of God taming His wrath in the face of repentance and offering comfort and peace. The pinnacle of this action though, is Golgotha and the empty tomb.

All of God’s wrath, all of His anger, all of His retribution were poured out in one tidal wave that crashed over Jesus as He hung on His Cross. Everything you’ve done to anger God, everything you’ve ever said to raise His ire, everything you’ve ever thought that offended Him, crashed into Jesus and shook the foundations of all creation. In that moment the Father’s anger turned away from you. His wrath was satisfied. Because His wrath has been turned from you, because He sees you, a baptized child, through the lens of Jesus-for-you, you can see Him as the One who is always ready to comfort you, always ready to gather you up in His everlasting arms and keep you.

You are able to “sing praises to the LORD, for He has done gloriously” for you. He has taken away your sin and replaced it with Jesus’ holiness, so that He can always look at you as His child, His beloved. He loves you more than anyone else in this world ever could. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

From God can nothing move me; He will not step aside But gently will reprove me And be my constant guide. He stretches out His hand In evening and in morning, My life with grace adorning Wherever I may stand. (From God Can Nothing Move Me, LSB 713:1)
Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

MAY 12, 2020

Today’s Reading: James 1:16-21

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1:17)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Luther’s Small Catechism says that God the Father “has given me...He gives me...He richly and daily provides me with all I need...” You can fill in the rest. James covered it all in one line in his epistle, but Luther thought it would be a good idea to put a list together, because it is too easy to forget all that God provides.

It’s easy to think of your parents, your own paycheck, or your grandparents as the source of your clothes, your snacks and fun, and your Christmas and birthday gifts. But that’s how your Lord and God works, isn’t it? He provides for you through the work of those who have come into your life, to support your life in this world. But it doesn’t stop there; it goes beyond that.

In the creation of faith within you, He has made you His own creation, and His own hands in this world to provide for others. “Christ lives in me,” Paul says, and that’s what James agrees with here. You are the first fruits of God’s creatures, the one with a divine mark given in Holy Baptism, who goes out into this world as the light of Christ. But you never go alone; you are never a free agent in your works for those around you.

The Lord God has equipped you in every way possible for life in this sinful and broken world, and He has provided you with the means to learn even more about His love for you through His called and ordained servants, through the study of His Word, and in corporate worship with your fellow Christians. God your Father never changes. He is the unmoving rock of certainty in your life, the one always ready to hear your needs, and always ready to give you everything you need as you navigate the world around you that He has given.

Go forth joyfully in Jesus, knowing that He is beside you all the way, never abandoning you, and always providing you with all you need, especially the gift of salvation. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Now thank we all our God, With hearts and hands and voices, Who wondrous things has done, In whom His world rejoices; Who from our mothers’ arms Has blest us on our way With countless gifts of love And still is ours today.

(Now Thank We All Our God, LSB 895:1)
Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter  
MAY 13, 2020


*In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.*  
(The Small Catechism: The Creed, Third Article)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Atonement is a bloody thing. All of the Mosaic sacrificial system is bloody, in fact. Purification after giving birth? Blood. Redeeming a first-born son? Blood. Passover? More blood. The Day of Atonement? Buckets and buckets of blood. The pavement stones of the temple were permanently stained dark red from all the centuries of blood that was shed in payment for the sins of God’s people.

Ultimately, though, all that blood was for nothing, wasn’t it? God our Father says through Hosea, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” And David writes, “You would not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.” All that blood, from all those sacrifices, pointed to the one sacrifice that truly mattered, that truly forgave sins—the suffering and death of Jesus.

One sacrifice, one blood-shedding, for all of mankind. One death in which the blood of Jesus covers every one of your sins. And where is this forgiveness given? How is this blood poured out upon you? In your Baptism, where you die and rise again with Jesus. Where His blood covers you.

Since it is one sacrifice for all, made only once, though, how can you be sure all your sins are forgiven? Because of the Lord’s promises to you in His Word and Sacraments. Because of your pastor’s declaration that, by the command of His (and your) Lord, Jesus Christ, he forgives all your sins. And He doesn’t forgive you in a stingy way. He heaps it upon you. The Holy Spirit makes sure that your church is a place where God’s forgiveness is abundantly poured out upon you and for you. It is a never-ending flood of forgiveness.

Rejoice that you have been given such a gift, that your Lord and God bathes you so freely in forgiveness that you never need to fear that it will come to an end. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

*We all confess the Holy Ghost, Who, in highest heaven dwelling With God the Father and the Son, Comforts us beyond all telling; Who the Church, His own creation, Keeps in unity of spirit. Here forgiveness and salvation Daily come through Jesus’ merit. All flesh shall rise, and we shall be In bliss with God eternally. (We All Believe in One True God, LSB 954:3)*
Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter

MAY 14, 2020


If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him.

(Leviticus 24:19–20)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. These words from God’s Law in Leviticus are easily twisted into a means of seeking retribution. People the world over have used them as justification for lashing out in anger at the one who has harmed them, to make sure they pay for their sins. But that’s not what almighty God means here. This is a limiting statement, a restraint against overreacting. Don’t respond in anger to the one who has harmed you and take more than you are given to take.

The people of Israel were to take no more than they lost from the one who harmed them. It must have been a bit strange to see a panel of people gathered to yank a tooth or poke out an eye for the injured one. But that is what the Lord instructed for those who had been harmed. It seems odd to our ears, especially in this age of courtrooms, fines, probation, and deferred adjudication, to think that a court would physically harm one who is guilty of harming another.

You no longer have to worry about being physically maimed in payment for the harm you do to someone else. In Jesus, God the Father carried out all the retribution that was needed for His children and for everyone. Jesus died for the sins of everyone, not just for believers. Are you due to lose an eye for something you did? How about have a bone broken because of some shenanigans? Don’t worry, Jesus took that punishment for you. In the same way, Jesus already paid for those wounds you have received from others.

Jesus stood there at the place of punishment and absorbed all of the wounds and suffering due to you and bore them in His death so that you would never need to suffer the wrath you deserved for your sin against God. No matter how bad your sins against your neighbor are, or their sins against you, what you did towards God was far worse, but Jesus has answered for them in His death and resurrection that you may be free. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

For us He prayed; for us He taught; For us His daily works He wrought, By words and signs and actions thus Still seeking not Himself but us. For us by wickedness betrayed, For us, in crown of thorns arrayed, He bore the shameful cross and death; For us He gave His dying breath.

(O Love, How Deep, LSB 544:4-5)
Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter

MAY 15, 2020


He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” (Luke 13:22–24)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. If you look at Jesus from a modern perspective, this is when the wheels start to fall off during His ministry. He has set His eyes for Jerusalem, and He is inexorably being drawn to that hill outside the city. As He gets closer, and as that Good Friday draws nearer, the number of His followers becomes fewer and fewer, until only John and Mary are with Him at the cross. Even now He warns His hearers that they will run from Him, and from salvation, soon enough.

How narrow is the door of salvation? It is only as wide as Jesus’s Cross, for He is the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life given by which you may be saved. “Did God really say that? Does Jesus really mean that? Surely, if God loves us He won’t be so judgey!” You’ve probably heard variations of those questions at some point. The whole thrust is that God can only save if He works the way *I* want Him to. It is a very selfish and exclusive way to think, not to mention a wholesale slap in the face to the First Commandment.

On the other hand, passing through the narrow door should be the easiest option in front of you. It doesn’t require anything from you by way of works. It seems odd, maybe, that Jesus tells you to “strive to enter” by believing and trusting Him only. But that’s how He has given Himself to you and for you. You can only believe and trust with the faith that He has given to you by the power of the Holy Spirit in your Baptism and strengthened by visits to the altar for the Supper.

Enter by the narrow door of Jesus’ Cross, for it is the only way, and you have already been drawn through it by the working of God for you in Jesus. Thanks be to God for the victory! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, You have called us to enter Your kingdom through the narrow door. Guide us by Your Word and Spirit, and lead us now and always into the feast of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
MAY 16, 2020

Today’s Reading: Introit for the Sixth Sunday of Easter
(Psalm 66:1-2a, 17, 19-20; antiphon: Isaiah 48:20b)

But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessèd be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!
(From the Introit for the Sixth Sunday of Easter)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. It seems odd to bless God, doesn’t it? After all He is the One who blesses, right? But this psalm is all about calling out the wonderful deeds of almighty God so that others can know how faithful He is, and how worthy of our worship He is.

Even in the midst of all that you’ve done, the Lord God is still near you and caring for you. Even when you’ve slipped completely away from Him, the Lord gathers you back up into His arms to bless and keep you. So it is absolutely proper to call Him blessed and to sing His praises to those around you. The psalmist recounts all the mighty deeds of God in saving the people of Israel from Egypt and the centuries of warfare and captivity. In all of it, the one steady constant was the Lord God and His love for His people. He never lost faith in them, even when they lost faith in Him.

So it is for you. Your Lord Christ has never lost faith in you. You might have thought you could run and hide and find a place where He is not, so that you could be free of Him. But He was already there waiting for you, ready to scoop you up into His arms once again. You might have thought that you sinned so horribly that there was no way God would ever forgive you. But there stood Jesus, pierced hands reaching out to you, the words of forgiveness on His lips for you.

No, God your Father has not rejected your prayers. He has not removed His steadfast love. Instead, He heaped it upon you higher in times of need. Right now He stands ready to hear your prayer, to forgive your sins, to feed you with His life-giving Sacrament, so that you can use those same blood-whetted lips to thank and praise Him for all He has done, and continues to do, for you. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

For no one can condemn me Or set my hope aside; Now hell no more can claim me: Its fury I deride. No sentence now reproves me, No guilt destroys my peace; For Christ, my Savior, loves me And shields me with His grace.                (If God Himself Be for Me, LSB 724:5)
Today’s Reading: John 16:23-33

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Tribulation seems to be the perpetual state for the modern young person. Something is always going wrong. Whether it is parents, school drama, your sports team, the love of your life, or even (yes) your youth group, tribulation comes for you repeatedly, doesn’t it? There are days when you don’t even want to bother getting out of bed—to say nothing of leaving the house—because you know what’s waiting for you, and you don’t want to face it.

Jesus has the answer for you. Once again, He’s speaking to the disciples just before He is arrested on Holy Thursday. They are going to experience a whole boatload of tribulation over the next few days, and then, a never-ending stream of it for the rest of their lives. Even so, Jesus calms them with His words. He speaks His peace to them. He comforts them with the assurance that He has overcome anything the world can throw at them.

He says the same thing to you. This world hates you. It wants to marginalize you, make fun of you, and yes, even kill you. But take heart: Jesus has overcome the world! Ultimately, it cannot harm you. The Lord of creation has wrestled death to the ground and killed it in His own death and resurrection. He has completely defeated Satan for you and destroyed the world’s power over you. Rest secure in His nail-pierced grasp, knowing that whatever this world throws at you, He has seen it, lived it, and conquered it for you. As that beloved hymn says, “Death you cannot end my gladness, I am baptized into Christ!”

Because you are baptized into Christ, eternity is yours. Life everlasting is yours, and eternal salvation before the Lamb upon His throne is yours, all because Jesus has overcome this world for you. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

O God, the giver of all that is good, by Your holy inspiration grant that we may think those things that are right and by Your merciful guiding accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter)
Monday of the Sixth Week of Easter

MAY 18, 2020

Today’s Reading: Numbers 21:4-9
Daily Lectionary: Numbers 8:5-26; Luke 15:11-32

And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

(Numbers 21:8–9)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Wait a minute! This sounds an awful lot like idolatry! Moses makes a bronze snake, sets it on a pole, and people are healed from a venomous snakebite if they look at it? Why not look to God? Isn’t He the one through whom true healing is given?

Yes, He is. And it may seem weird that the One True God would direct Moses to do something that appears to be so out of character for a God who demands such diligent adherence to His Law, until you look behind the snake, behind the bronze. Why does God tell Moses to do it this way? A snake is the cause of death so they, at God’s command, look upon its representation and are then healed. They look on the lifted-up one in faith, but not with just a blind glance or a quick look. They believe they will be healed because God said to look and live.

In John 3 Jesus says that He must be lifted up just like the bronze snake was, so that sinful humanity might look upon Him and live. Again, it isn’t an idle glance at a crucifix that saves. It isn’t “Hey, God, I looked at your Jesus, what’s in it for me?” Rather, one who has faith that God’s promise is true looks upon the crucified Son of God and is healed, saved from the death of sin. Jesus was lifted up on the pole of the Cross so that the snakebite of sin, its deadly venom coursing through your veins, would be cured forever.

Trust this promise of the Lord. Trust His Holy Word of salvation for you. Trust, with the faith that He gave you in your Baptism, that this Word of the Lord is faithful and true: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” It isn’t because you took a chance on Him, but because He gave everything for you and created saving faith within you, so that you may live forever in His kingdom. 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. Be of good cheer, for God’s own Son Forgives all sins which you have done; And, justified by Jesus’ blood, Your Baptism grants the highest good. (God Loved the World So That He Gave, LSB 571:3-4)
Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter
MAY 19, 2020

Today’s Reading: James 1:22-27

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

(James 1:22–24)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. “Doers of the Word of God.” You don’t have to be afraid of that phrase. You might think that James is getting dangerously close to a kind of works righteousness here, demanding that you do things to please God, rather than just believe Him. After all, he chides his readers to not be hearers only. Being a doer of the word is a natural outgrowth of being a hearer, James says. Jesus Himself calls on all His children to “love your neighbor as yourself.” And we understand that love will often be action, doing those things that the Body of Christ would do for anyone near and dear.

It can be hard to love your neighbor sometimes, though. This is true. Some people truly are hard to love. Yet you are called to love anyone who isn’t you. James isn’t writing this in a vacuum, though. He knows that the people reading this epistle have heard how much their Lord and God loves them, and he shows them how that love for them becomes love in action towards others.

“We love because he first loved us,” John says. That’s what the Christian life is, a life of service and love of others. But that love isn’t always some grand gesture, or a trip halfway around the world. Did you help an older member of your church with a hymnal on Sunday? Open a door, or pass out a bulletin? Did you take out the trash when mom asked, or do your laundry without being asked? You were a doer of the word.

These are the works your Lord gives you. He places upon you a vocation or five and puts opportunities in front of you that allow you to fulfill those vocations. Doers of the Word. You’ve been equipped by your Lord for good works, so freely go forth and love those people He has placed in your life. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, keep Your Church in Your perpetual mercy; and because without You we cannot but fall, preserve us 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 Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter)
Wednesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

MAY 20, 2020


Our Father who art in heaven...With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

(The Small Catechism: The Lord’s Prayer, Introduction)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. It’s hard to get along with dear ol’ dad sometimes, isn’t it? The rules, the curfew, the grounding, changing the WiFi password and not telling you. Or maybe your father is absent, literally and you don’t have a relationship with him at all. You read Dr. Luther’s words above and struggle to think of how to pray to God as if He is a dear father, because you have a hard time seeing your earthly father that way.

It is a sad side effect of this sinful and broken world that so many people have that response to God the Father. But as with all things of the faith, our Lord gives you a path through the darkness, a light to show you the way to a proper understanding of your God for you. Yeah, maybe your father is hard to communicate with. But you know someone you can speak to about difficult issues, about your joys and your sorrows. It is probably someone your Father in heaven has placed in your life for you.

Give thanks to God that He does give you someone to see as a father figure. Repent of your own feelings of disappointment with your own earthly father and pray for the strength to mend that relationship as our Lord gives you the ability to. Not everything in this life will be healed. Not every relationship will reflect the relationship God our Father wants to have with you, it is true. But He still shows you the better path, through Jesus’ cross and to the Father’s throne, where He promises to always hear your prayers, and where He will always listen and give heed to the needs you bring before Him.

Why? Because of Jesus. It is always because of Jesus that our Father hears you, because it is always His gift of faith that gives you strength, His blood that has purified you, and His Word that shows you the way. Because of Jesus you can boldly and confidently speak to your Father in heaven. And He will always hear, and always answer. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Our Father, who from heav’n above Bids all of us to live in love As members of one family And pray to You in unity. Teach us no thoughtless words to say But from our inmost hearts to pray.

(Our Father, Who from Heaven Above, LSB 766:1)
The Ascension of Our Lord

MAY 21, 2020


Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” (Luke 24:44)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Just before He ascended to the Father’s right hand, Jesus made sure His sent ones knew exactly what they were to do without His physical presence, and why they were being sent to do it. One last time, He opened the Scriptures to them and clearly traced the line from Genesis, through the oracles of the prophets, across the psalms, and up to His own life, death, and resurrection, to be sure they understood that this is how it always had to be—the way it must be for salvation to be procured and proclaimed for all humanity. Now, as He is set to return to the right hand of His Father’s throne, He tells them that they are to pick up the mantle. They are to go forth, not just in Jerusalem and Galilee, but to all the world, to preach the forgiveness of sins to those who don’t even know they need it.

Remember the last time you needed your sins forgiven? Your pastor has been sent to you, just like the apostles were sent to the known world, to proclaim forgiveness, life, and salvation. When you weren’t sure if God would forgive you, it was your sent pastor who reassured you that the blood of Jesus covers all your sin. All of it. When Jesus ascended, He didn’t disappear. He is just as close now as He was to the apostles then, in a slightly different way.

The Holy Spirit has been at work creating faith in you, and Jesus has been upon the mercy seat of the altar of your church, present in bread and wine made Body and Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Don’t ever worry that you somehow missed out because you never saw Jesus on this earth. He made sure you would always be able to touch Him, receive Him, be blessed by Him in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Even though He returned to the Father, He still fills all creation, and especially your church, where He is ready to proclaim His Word to you through the lips of your pastor. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, as Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ascended into the heavens, so may we also ascend in heart and mind and continually dwell there with Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Collect for The Ascension of Our Lord)
Friday of the Sixth Week of Easter

MAY 22, 2020

Today’s Reading: Acts 1:1-11

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

(Acts 1:8)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. Witnesses are those who speak the truth about what they have seen. Luke says that he had questioned eyewitnesses before writing his Gospel and this book of the Acts of the Apostles. So also, Jesus sends His apostles as witnesses to the ends of the earth to speak what they have come to know about Him.

It is sometimes hard to get witnesses to agree, though. There are just enough differences amongst the Gospel records that some people doubt any of it is true. The same thing happens in everyday life. You’ve probably had two people tell you the same story in completely different ways, yet they both swore their versions were true.

What is consistent though, what never changes, is the content of what these witnesses speak to their hearers. The content can’t change, because it is the very living and active Word of God. It is the truth of the work of the salvation of all mankind through the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. You wouldn’t know about that, though, if the apostles had just stayed in Jerusalem or Galilee after Jesus’s ascension. They had to be sent. They had to go, teaching and baptizing along the way.

This is how the message of your salvation came to you. From lips to ears to heart, generation after generation, the Holy Spirit guided and gave power to His witnesses so the number of the faithful would grow daily by the power of that same Word. Thanks be to God that He saw fit to deliver His Word and His Son and your salvation to you this way. Not only do you have a fleshly Jesus, you have a fleshly witness, given for you in your pastor to teach, comfort, and guide you in this life, until your risen and ascended Lord returns to gather you into His New Creation. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

To our lives of wanton wand’ring Send Your Spirit, promised guide; Through our lives of fear and failure With your pow’r and love abide; Welcome us, as You were welcomed, To an endless Eastertide.  

(Up Through Endless Ranks of Angels, LSB 491:3)
Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter

MAY 23, 2020

Today’s Reading: Introit for the Seventh Sunday of Easter
(Psalm 27:1,11a, 12; antiphon: vs. 7a, 8b, 9a)


The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (From the Introit for the Seventh Sunday of Easter)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. This psalm has a long history in the Church of being used by Christians who are in distress. Whether it is illness, death, or even a missing persons case, these words from the psalmist have brought comfort to troubled souls. There really aren’t many words of Scripture that more clearly state the deep truth of God’s presence and assurance to the Christian. Like Paul’s words to the Romans, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” these words assure you that nothing can come between you and God. Nothing can tear you away.

With the Lord God fighting for you, who can overpower you? When you rest secure in the Lord’s arms, who can mount a successful attack against you? That is not to say that you will never be assailed by Satan. You know all too well how the evil one deceives and lies his way near you to cut your legs out from under you. He can’t help himself. He’s deluded himself into thinking he can win this war, even in the face of the Risen Christ standing triumphantly outside His tomb on Easter morning.

The trials come, the struggles of life claw at you and try to pull you away, turn you away, and drown out the voice of your Good Shepherd. But through it all, your Lord and God stands firm, unmoving. The world may crash against you and threaten to tear you away from that place of safety, but your Lord Jesus will never let you go. His pierced hands have you in an unbreakable grip, holding you until the Last Day.

Take heart in the psalmist’s words, then. Write them on your heart and let them be on your lips whenever trouble comes. For the Lord is an undimmable beacon of light in the darkness of your troubles. He is the unassailable fortress no enemy can breach. Your Risen Jesus fights for you and God your Father defends you. They will never let you go. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Take heart, have hope, my spirit, And do not be dismayed; God helps in ev’ry trial And makes you unafraid. Await His time with patience Through darkest hours of night Until the sun you hoped for Delights your eager sight. (Entrust Your Days and Burdens, LSB 754:3)
The Seventh Sunday of Easter

MAY 24, 2020

Today’s Reading: John 15:26-16:4

And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. (John 16:3)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. One of the hardest things to understand is how Christians, or those who call themselves Christians, can act contrary to God’s Word and still think they are doing the right thing, or serving God while doing it. Jesus speaks specifically about the religious authorities who plan to kill him by crucifixion and then shift their wrath to the newly sent apostles who proclaim Him as the salvation of the world. Their great sin is unbelief, Jesus says. They do not know the Father.

In spite of all their work with Holy Scripture, these religious authorities still cannot (or will not) see the Father working through His Son to wash away the sin of the world in Jesus’s death and resurrection. So they will turn to violence and shunning and shaming and rejection of those who carry the message of life everlasting. But not all is doom and gloom. The Helper is on the way, too. The Holy Spirit comes to guide and keep the sent ones, to bear witness, and to help them bear witness, to the saving work of Jesus for the world.

No matter how bad the persecution of the faithful has gotten over the centuries, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, has always borne up His messengers, His witnesses, so that they would be able to proclaim salvation to the world. You can look through history for examples, or just look at the news today, for examples of those who do not know the Father rejecting His message of salvation with violence. The constant throughout it all is that the Holy Spirit continues to be faithful so that the Word of God may be proclaimed and accomplish the purpose for which it was sent.

You have heard the Gospel proclaimed because the Helper guided that proclamation down the rivers of time, from Jesus’s lips and to your ears through your pastor, so that you would be comforted by the work of Jesus for you. Thanks be to God for the faithful sent ones who, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, deliver Jesus for you! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

O King of glory, Lord of hosts, uplifted in triumph far above all heavens, leave us not without consolation but send us the Spirit of truth whom You promised from the Father; for You live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Collect for the Seventh Sunday of Easter)
Today’s Reading: Ezekiel 36:22-28

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.                                                                                      (Ezekiel 36:25)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. There is baptismal imagery all over the Old Testament. Hopefully you’ve been taught to recognize it when you read your Bible. Today’s text is pretty clear, isn’t it? Ezekiel almost shouts that these words of the Lord are baptismal.

The people of God are exiled, driven from home and settled uncomfortably in Babylon. The surface reason is that the Babylonian armies have conquered Israel. The real reason is that God’s people have been faithless towards Him and He uses the Babylonians to discipline them for their idolatry. How bad was it? There were idols to false gods in the Jerusalem temple, not only in the courtyards, but inside the very temple building itself! The priests of Israel were praying to false gods across the room from the throne of God the Father Himself, which was in the Holy of Holies upon the Ark of the Covenant!

Even in the midst of the exile, when God’s people are in a foreign land, among people of a foreign language and culture, He still loves and cares for them. Even though they had abandoned Him so completely, He loved them. Ezekiel proclaims God’s Word to them and says that God will wash them clean, cleanse them from idolatry, and restore them to their rightful place in Jerusalem again.

It wouldn’t last, of course. You know well enough that Jerusalem would be destroyed again after Jesus’s day. Until then, the Lord was merciful and gracious, just as He is with you. Through Baptism, He has sprinkled water upon you and washed you clean of your idolatries. He named you as His child and cleansed you in the blood of Jesus so that you would have an eternal home with Him in the New Creation.

When your idolatries creep up on you, when you realize that you’ve turned from Him, remember your Baptism and return to the Lord your God, for He is merciful and will receive you again into His presence, because you are His child forever. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ! Drop your ugly accusation, I am not so soon enticed. Now that to the font I’ve traveled, All your might has come unraveled, And, against your tyranny, God, my Lord, unites with me!

(God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It, LSB 594:3)
Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 26, 2020

Today's Reading: 1 Peter 4:7-14

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

(1 Peter 4:12–13)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. There are any number of accounts of God's people being persecuted in the early years of the Church. It was almost expected that some sort of pain would come your way if you were a Christian. Don't be surprised about it, Peter says. Paul tells the Galatians about the "marks of Jesus" he bears on his body. You see in the news today (if you know where to look) that faithful Christians around the world are suffering trials for confessing the faith.

Don't be surprised. The world hates Christians. So does the devil, and even your own sinful flesh hates your faithfulness. The common thread among the early Christians, though, was that they rejoiced that the Lord God found them worthy to bear these trials and sufferings, and to suffer as their Lord Jesus had.

In the context of our American lifestyle, we have no clue what that means. We avoid suffering as much as we can, through therapy, pills, and more. Anything to avoid whatever looks like suffering. We don't even consider the idea of suffering for the faith! But God's Word says something different. There may well be a day when you are targeted by Satan for your faith, and he directs someone you might even consider a friend to cause you grief because of your belief in Christ.

Rejoice in that day, Peter says. But how? How can you rejoice that you are about to suffer? You can because of the eternity Jesus has prepared for you. What is 100 years or even a day compared to forever?

Your Lord God knows you. He never leaves you alone, and He will not abandon you. If He considers you worthy to go through a trial that you think is beyond you, rest in His hands. Call on Him to give you strength, because He will. He has found you worthy, He will never abandon you, and He will save you, all for Christ's sake. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Lord God, heavenly Father, as we struggle here below with divisions among us, searching for peace among men, remind us daily of the peace of heaven purchased through the bloody death and triumphant resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who with You and the Holy Spirit is one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Collect for the Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter)
Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 27, 2020


God’s name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it.

(The Small Catechism: The Lord’s Prayer, First Petition)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Trying to keep God’s Name holy is a strange concept. It is His Name, after all. How can you do anything to it? How can you damage the Name of the Most High God when He is the all-powerful one? Pretty easily, actually. Have you ever broken something that belonged to someone else, especially by misusing it? You didn’t mean to do it, it just happened. If only you had been more careful!

Grandma’s special crystal vase should be handled more carefully than the plastic cup you can also use to put fresh flowers in. So it is with the Name of God. You keep His Name holy when you treat it properly, when you read, hear, and learn the Word of God as He intends you to receive it. When it is taught in truth and purity. It isn’t that you have damaged God’s Name itself. It is holy in and of itself. Rather, it is that you have caused others to see His Name in a poor light. In a sense, it brings shame upon God’s Name when His Christians behave in a way contrary to God’s Word. It brings God’s status down a notch or two when His name is used flippantly or poorly, using it to curse others.

Instead of being terrified of the possibility of misusing God’s Name, take the positive route. Gather with your fellow Christians to hear His Word preached. Go to the communion rail in humble repentance and joyfully receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, given for you for the forgiveness of sins. When you don’t understand something your pastor says, ask him directly if you misheard him. He will appreciate the opportunity to clarify something he might have misspoken.

Your Lord and God wants you to hallow His Name and use it properly for your devotion and your salvation. He gives you that opportunity every time your congregation gathers for worship. Gladly gather with your fellow Christians and hear the Lord speak to you by His holy Name and you will! In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

“Your name be hallowed. Help us Lord, In purity to keep Your Word, That to the glory of Your name We walk before You free from blame. Let no false teaching us pervert; All poor deluded souls convert.”

(Our Father, Who from Heaven Above, LSB 766:2)
Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 28, 2020


Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’ But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’ And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Luke 20:13–15)

In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen. Selfishness. That’s what Jesus calls out. The religious ruling class did not like that Jesus had drawn such a crowd to Himself. They feared that He would eclipse them and become more important, more favored, better remembered. Wow, were they ever right! Control. That’s what they wanted. Complete and total control over the people and over the message broadcast to everyone in Jerusalem and Judea. But Jesus was having none of it. So He prophesies to them a parable about the very near future.

They weren’t playing around, though. They decided that it would be best if Jesus were…eliminated. Removed. Taken out of the equation. And He knows that’s what they were thinking, so He speaks these words, knowing full well that they would become true very soon. As painful as it would be, Jesus knew this was the only way to break their grip on religion. The only way to destroy their control and selfishness. He does the same to you. You cast Jesus out of the vineyard when you choose your own ideas over His Word or when you decide that you know better how to live than He does. Even when you turn your back on His preaching and go your own way. But He doesn’t leave you there.

He always confronts you with His truth, the truth of Law and Gospel. He crushes you with His Law and shows you how you have failed Him and His Word. Then He gives you His Gospel. He hears your pleas for mercy, your cry of confession. He covers you with His Absolution and washes you in the blood of His forgiveness. He reassures you of the salvation won for you when He was cast out of the vineyard of Jerusalem to be killed outside the city walls. Remember that Jesus did all of this for you. His blood covers all your sin, even your selfishness and control. He destroyed death and its grip on you so that you would be able to rest in His peace. Forever. In the Name ✝ of Jesus. Amen.

Christ is made the sure foundation, Christ, our head and cornerstone, Chosen of the Lord and precious, Binding all the Church in one; Holy Zion’s help forever And our confidence alone. (Christ Is Made The Sure Foundation, LSB 909:1)
Friday of the Seventh Week after Easter

MAY 29, 2020


And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock.                   (Numbers 20:11)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen. Oops. Have you ever messed something up so badly that almighty God Himself banned you from ever going home? I would bet that you haven’t, but Moses certainly did. God specifically told Moses to “tell the rock” to bring forth water for the people of Israel. But that’s not what Moses did. He assembled the crowd and basically said, “Hey, y’all, watch this!” before striking the rock with his staff.

Why didn’t God embarrass Moses right then and there by refusing to let the water gush forth since Moses had acted so selfishly? Because He was thinking in much broader terms than Moses was. He had His whole assembled people to care for, so He allowed the water to flow, even if Moses had openly rebelled against His command. Of course, this is the sin that keeps Moses from ever entering the Promised Land. His only glimpse is from Mount Nebo much later, right before he dies.

Even with Moses’s open rebellion against Him, God the Father still has mercy on His people. He always works to care for His people, even when His people do exactly what He tells them not to do. Our God is a God of love, a God of mercy, a God of grace. Even when you sin and mess up so badly that you wonder why He doesn’t just blast you into atoms with a lightning bolt, your God loves you. He may not be happy with you, and you may suffer the consequences of rebelling against Him, but He still loves you, just like your parents do even when they ground you.

Ultimately, God punished Moses’s sin through Jesus, just as He punishes your sin through Jesus, too, because He knew that there was no way you could ever satisfy on your own His demands for perfection or for salvation. Thanks be to God that He is a God of mercy, pity, and grace for you! Thanks be to God that Jesus has borne your failures so that you may live with Him for all eternity where the River of Life freely flows from His throne! In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Living God, Your almighty power is made known chiefly in showing mercy and pity. Grant us the fullness of Your grace to lay hold of Your promises and live forever in Your presence; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.          (Collect for the Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter)
Eve of Pentecost
MAY 30, 2020

Today’s Reading: John 14:15-21

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16–17)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen. One would think that Jesus wouldn’t need to say that He was sending the Holy Spirit so many times. You would think that the disciples would get it, that they would take comfort in knowing that the Holy Spirit was with them.

In the same vein, you might think you don’t need to hear these words from Jesus so many times either. “I hear ya, Jesus. I get it, okay?” But do you, really? Or do you need to be reassured that the Lord is with you, that His Holy Spirit has come to you to be with you forever? Yeah, that’s the right answer—you need to be reassured of His constant presence with you.

And that’s okay, because it is far too easy to forget. When the world assails you, when even your friends get angry with you, when Sunday morning just doesn’t make any sense to you, you need to hear these words of Jesus for you. In the very next verse, Jesus promises that He will not leave you as an orphan. You are not alone in this world, even if there are days when it seems like you are the only person in existence. This Holy Spirit is your very life, for He has brought you saving faith through God’s Holy Word, through your Baptism, and in leading you to the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus.

Tomorrow, when you gather with your fellow believers at church, you will hear again how God the Father sent the Holy Spirit to the first believers on Pentecost. It’ll sound extraordinary and different from your experience, but it is the same Holy Spirit who has come to you to dwell with you, to comfort you, and to keep you in the saving faith Jesus won for you. In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and ever-living God, You fulfilled Your promise by sending the gift of the Holy Spirit to unite disciples of all nations in the cross and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. By the preaching of the Gospel spread this gift to the ends of the earth; 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 Eve of Pentecost)