

REFLECTIONS

Easter Sunday - Saturday The Second Week of Easter

April 9 - April 22, 2023



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APRIL 9 - APRIL 22, 2023

This season's Reflections were written by

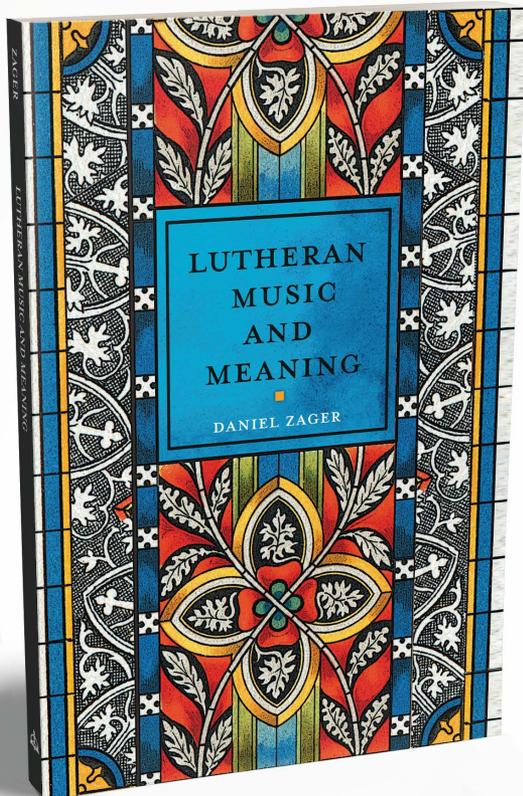
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A Short Form for Daily Reflection

ADAPTED FROM LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

Make the sign of the Holy Cross and say:

In the name of the Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit. 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, such 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.

Easter Sunday

APRIL 9, 2023

Today's Reading: Matthew 28:1-10

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 14:10-31; Hebrews 9:1-28

He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Matthew 28:6

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is Risen!! Heard any good jokes lately? Believe it or not there were some Church Fathers who said that at Easter God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead. They called it the 'Risus paschalis — the Easter laugh,'" As Lutherans being serious and liturgical types, this might seem disrespectful and distasteful. But maybe there is something to this. The world needs a serious laugh, because everyone has become so serious.

As church people we can take ourselves much too seriously. Life can be hard. Life can give us fears. Life is painful. But Easter means that life is God's, and God has the last word. So today why not smile, relax, and laugh. He is risen

Because this is the one thing that actually matters, and if it's not true, then everything else is pointless, and your life is just waddling towards the grave. But no, in fact, Christ is risen!

They killed Him! Crucified Him! The world, we all, turned our back on Him! The best friend we've ever had, and we betrayed Him! God Who has become our dear Brother! And yet our efforts are a colossal failure. Jesus is right. Forgive them for they know not what they do. We don't know what we are doing, and we never really have. The world survives on grace and that is absolutely amazing. Amazing enough to cause us to laugh a little or a lot. Jesus told them pretty explicitly that He would be raised on the third day. And they run to the tomb, and see the Angel of the Lord sitting on the rock that was sealed shut. God sends his messenger to show and declare He sits on death and laughs. "Death, where is your victory?"

This really is the most remarkable thing that has ever happened. Christ is risen! The women run to the other disciples! I have seen the Lord! Mary's words are enough. And ever since, the church has said these words, on this day, early on the first day of the week. I have seen the Lord! What joy! If a crucified Jesus is raised from the dead, death is overthrown!

There will be more Resurrections. You will be raised, for death cannot grip you, for all you who have been baptized into His death have also been baptized into His Resurrection! He is not worried. He is not angry. He is alive! Truly alive! Be of good cheer and do not lose heart! Let out a little laughter and joy today. Christ is risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O God, for our redemption You gave Your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross and by His glorious Resurrection delivered us from the power of the enemy. Grant that all our sin may be drowned through daily repentance and that day by day we may arise to live before You in righteousness and purity forever; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for Easter Sunday)

Monday - The First Week of Easter

APRIL 10, 2023

Today's Reading: Luke 24:13-35

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 15:1-18; Hebrews 9:1-28

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. Luke 24:30-31

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! Saint Luke recounts that on the Sunday of the Resurrection, two disciples of Jesus were going from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were overwhelmed with all the news of hearing about the angel's announcement that Jesus was alive (v. 22ff) but still had doubts about the Resurrection. They were so immersed in their sadness and confusion that they could not recognize the risen Jesus in the person walking alongside them.

Do you notice how Jesus deals with these disciples? There, without any fuss, Jesus appeared to them and walked with them, his conversation helping to alleviate their fears. But then He speaks plainly with them "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Luke 24:26-27, Jesus joins them as they go along their way, but He also speaks to them plainly about how the Scripture points to Him. Soon He will be ascending to His Father and removed from their sight. Later as He sits with His disciples, He takes bread, blesses it, and breaks it. It isn't until Jesus breaks the bread and vanishes that they realize they have seen the risen Lord Jesus. But why does Jesus speak and break bread and then disappear? There were so many more questions, so many answers needed, and so many fears to be calmed. Jesus speaks, breaks bread, and then disappears from their sight to show them how He will be with us always to the very end of the age. The Word and Sacraments are how He will work with His church after the Ascension. Later Luke tells us in Acts chapter 2 that the early disciples followed this pattern of Jesus revealing Himself to all the world. "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 2:42

You may find yourself like these disciples, full of questions and doubts. Is this Jesus real? Did He rise from the dead? Or you may have more significant fears concerning yourself, your family and friends, this world, and our daily darkness and decay. But take heart; Jesus meets you in this life every time you gather around His gifts that are given to you. Just like those first disciples that Easter Sunday, Jesus He reveals Himself to us every Sunday as Scriptures and the Eucharist are spoken and distributed by Jesus through your pastor. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

*Here would I feed upon the bread of God, Here drink with Thee the royal wine of heav'n;
Here would I lay aside each earthly load, Here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiv'n.
(Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face, LSB 631: 2)*

Tuesday - The First Week of Easter

APRIL 11, 2023

Today's Reading: Luke 24:36-49

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 15:19-16:12; Hebrews 10:1-18

Have you anything here to eat? Luke 24:40

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! If you ever attend a funeral at a church and the pastor doesn't preach on the physical Resurrection of Jesus and the promise of the same resurrection of the deceased, you've been cheated. Jesus points to this important promise of the bodily resurrection. He points to it with a question with six simple words. "Have you anything here to eat?"

What an odd question Jesus asks at the height of all the commotion and craziness of His Resurrection. He rises from the dead, He appears to them, He shows His hands and feet, they still can't believe it and then He asks for grub? Believe it or not, this is an incredibly important question Jesus asks. So many in the early Christian church twisted and rearranged the Resurrection of Jesus. They said His body was stolen or the disciples were seeing things, they were delusional in the middle of their fears. Others have said that Jesus only rose spiritually but not physically. However, if Jesus only rose spiritually then our faith is in vain. This is why Jesus asks for something to eat. Despite what the movie Ghostbusters portrays, spirits or ghosts cannot eat physical food. You have to have a physical body to eat physical food. This is why Jesus asks the question, He shows them by eating, that He has physically risen from the dead! Why is this important for you and me?

It means that our resurrection will also be physical. You and I will one day be physically raised from the dead. Think of that: in your Baptism, you are promised that you not only have been crucified with Jesus but also risen with Jesus. (Cf Romans 6). We say in the Creed "I believe in the resurrection of the body..." The promise of heaven is not the end but the beginning. There always must be a resurrection. Jesus eating fish means that our bodies after the resurrection will be changed, just like Jesus' body was changed. Rather than me going on and on about this, let St. Paul remind you. "Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality." 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-54. We will be raised from the dead, physically, and in the end, Jesus will call us out of our graves to rise physically in the new heavens and new earth forever. Christ is risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Your name we bless, O risen Lord, And sing today with one accord The life laid down, the life restored: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! (Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and sing, LSB 475:4)

Wednesday - The First Week of Easter

APRIL 12, 2023

Today's Reading: John 21:1-14

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 16:13-35; Hebrews 10:19-39

Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. John 21:3

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is Risen! Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

How much proof do you need to believe something? If someone proves something to you, do you believe it or return to your old thoughts, beliefs, and ways? In the Gospels, Jesus' disciples were with Him for three and a half years. They heard Him teach, saw and participated in the miraculous, and heard Him speak plainly about His Death and Resurrection. Now in the whole course of the Resurrection of Jesus, we see Jesus over and over revealing Himself to His disciples once again. Just before today's reading, Jesus reveals Himself to Thomas and the twelve and shows His hands and side. He even tells them, "Do not disbelieve, but believe." (John 20:27). At the very beginning of John 21, the disciples have returned to their old life of being fishermen before Jesus ever called them. How much proof do they need to believe that Jesus is true God and true Man and the King of Kings? There is confusion, chaos, and indecision in their minds regarding what this all means. Yet, notice that Jesus doesn't try any new tricks to convince them. He goes back to Luke chapter 5 with the disciples. Just at the beginning, the disciples catch many fish John 21. They have come full circle to where it all began with them.

Instead of bashing these disciples for ignorance, take comfort from this passage. Faith in Jesus is always a challenging road. The Holy Spirit is willing, but our sinful flesh is always weak. We are constantly battling to return to the old ways of our Old Adam. When we find life burdensome and question who Jesus is and has He truly loved us, we find ourselves like the disciples. Yet, Jesus does not have any new tricks. He reminds us of our Baptism, where we were crucified and resurrected with Him and called to walk in the "newness of life" (Romans 6). Your Baptism points you back to the waters where Christ gave you new birth from above. The baptismal font reminds you of who you are in Jesus despite your questions, doubts, or uncertainty. Jesus also prepares a meal for you. Just as the feeding of the 5,000 and the preparation of breakfast on the seashore (notice the bread and fish again!) Jesus feeds us as well. Even after seeing the resurrected Lord Jesus and being invited to breakfast, one disciple dares to ask, "Who are you" - John 21:13. Likewise, Jesus bids us to the feast even with our fears, doubts, questions, and uncertainty. In the Eucharist, He forgives you of all your sins and strengthens your faith in Him. Blessed are you who have not seen and yet believe. Christ is Risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday - The First Week of Easter

APRIL 13, 2023

Today's Reading: Jeremiah 31:1-6

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 17:1-16; Hebrews 11:1-29

At that time, declares the LORD, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people. Jeremiah 31:1

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! We live and die by time. Whether getting up in time for school or getting to work on time, we have a clock on our wrists, phones, or computers. Watching time consumes so much of our day. Today Jeremiah says, "At that time..." Jer. 31:1. But what time is he talking about? Is it something in the past, today, or in the future? The answer is "Yes, but only through Jesus' Resurrection!" During the time of Easter, we tend to focus on Jesus' victory over death and how that impacts us now and in the future. But what about the past? Jesus' Resurrection isn't bound by time or space; it is for all people of all times, for He is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. In our reading today, the people of Israel are told that they will be freed from the yoke of their captives, freed from slavery, and restored to the Promised Land. Jeremiah is speaking to the people as they are in exile in the land of Babylon. They have all been separated from the Land, the Holy City, and the Temple. They certainly are wondering what God thinks of them if He is even with them. Jeremiah's words would have brought them comfort. But Jeremiah's words are not just for those who lived in the past; they are for us today and in the future. Jesus speaks about this in Luke 24 with His disciples "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets; He explained to them what was written in all the Scriptures about Himself." Luke 24:7

Jeremiah speaks of Israel's restoration today, but this is not just for those of the past; it is for all time! This restoration is understood as a resurrection brought back into the heavenly Jerusalem. But when will this be completed? What is the timeframe of the Messiah? Scripture tells us, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Christ Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, for all time and into eternity. We do not need to worry about the times of today, yesterday, or in the future. By His Resurrection, Jesus "...has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart, yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end." Christ is Risen! 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)

Friday - The First Week of Easter

APRIL 14, 2023

Today's Reading: Acts 10:34-43

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 18:5-27; Hebrews 12:1-24

So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality Acts 10:34

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! Inclusion is a trendy word today and is constantly shoved in front of our faces. There is nothing wrong with inclusivity, but the world's views often seem one-sided. If one group wants the freedom to live their own life, even if it's against God's law, then we, as Christians, rarely are included in confessing what we believe. We've gotten wrapped up in this for sure. We have all worried about our words, actions, and social media posts and if they fit the need for inclusivity. Acts 10 today speaks volumes about our Christian call to love others without discrimination; too often, we make distinctions between them and us or classify some people as worthier than others before God. God certainly shows no partiality concerning His Law and Gospel, and these gifts are not only for us but also for the life of the whole world.

Today Peter begins his discourse with the profound declaration: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right." By saying this, he affirms that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile – God looks at everyone equally. He then recounts how a vision he received showed him three times that foods once deemed "unclean" according to Jewish tradition were acceptable offerings to God. As the body of Christ today, we can recognize all people as part of God's creation and the people for whom Jesus died. As one confesses their sins against God's all-inclusive Law, there is all-inclusive forgiveness for everyone, no matter their sins. "Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Salvation is available to all people – because Christ died for the sins of the whole world, every last one of them, committed by everyone.

So, yes, be inclusive, but be inclusive of what our Lord teaches us. "Love your neighbor as yourself," "Pray for your enemies..." Each person was made by our loving Creator and deserved respect regardless of whether they know Him. Yet we also pray that many more may be turned to repentance to receive the all-inclusive savior who died for all and rose for all so that we might have life to the fullest. Christ is risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

*All are redeemed, both far and wide, Since Thou, O Lord, for all hast died.
Grant us the will and grace provide, To love them all in thee! (O God of Mercy,
God of Might, LSB 852:4)*

Saturday - The First Week of Easter

APRIL 15, 2023

Today's Reading: Psalm 105:4-7; antiphon: Psalm 105:8

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 19:1-25; Hebrew 13:1-21

Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered, Psalm 105:5

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! An old saying says, "those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it." This statement is typically used to remind us of our past failures and faults and that we hopefully learned from them and didn't repeat them. But what about the joyous parts of our history? My dad passed away almost 20 years ago, and I have a long account of memories, joys, and sorrows I shared with him. I often recall those things with my children and even try to imitate what I learned from my father. As Christians, we have a shared history recounted in the Holy Scriptures.

Psalm 105 recounts and celebrates God's history with Israel, closely connected to the psalm before and after. These three psalms follow Israel's history from Creation and the Fall (Psalm 104) to God's call of Abraham to the conquest of the land (Psalm 105), ending in Israel's exile (Psalm 106). Today's reading shares family stories of God's faithfulness.

The Psalmist calls people to "remember the wonders he has done" (v. 5). Later in the Psalm; we are reminded of the promise God made to Abraham to give his descendants the land of Canaan (vv. 8-11). One theme runs through this psalm: God keeps His promises! Even today, we are reminded of the history of the salvation that Jesus continues to give for the world's life. In Divine Service One, during the Eucharistic Liturgy, we hear after the Words of Institution the proclamation of our history in Christ "As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. O Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, in giving us Your body and blood to eat and to drink, You lead us to remember and confess Your holy cross and passion, Your blessed death, Your rest in the tomb, Your Resurrection from the dead, Your ascension into heaven, and Your coming for the final judgment. As Jesus first gave the Eucharist to His disciples, this blessed meal has been passed down to us today to eat and drink. We remember and recall Jesus' passion, Death, and Resurrection in this meal. We repeat and celebrate our history over and over each Sunday. We recognize the Lord's faithfulness and the works He has done. By this history, we are never doomed but redeemed and saved. Christ is risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, God of 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. (Collect for Thanksgiving to God - LSB, page 310)

The Second Sunday of Easter

APRIL 16, 2023

Today's Reading: John 20:19-31

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 20:1-24; Luke 4:1-15

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so, I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."
John 20:21-23

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! I don't like to call Thomas "doubting Thomas." We are no better than Thomas; he was just blatantly honest about the whole Resurrection of Jesus thing. Yet, despite the questions, fears, and doubts about the Resurrection, Jesus is still giving peace, forgiveness, and strength. Jesus doesn't sit down and re-catechize his disciples. He breathes the Holy Spirit and establishes the pastoral office through the disciples. Why did Jesus institute the office of the holy ministry here? Why did He send out the apostles? Why did He send out pastors? Every ordained pastor hears these words from John 20, "As the Father has sent me, even so, I am sending you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.'" Jesus knows that no one is going to listen to anyone but Him. So how does He speak? Pastors speak in the stead and by the command of Jesus. Whoever receives the forgiveness of the pastor receives the forgiveness of Christ. Any pastor will tell you that we've had people object to this... who do you think you are... forgiving sins. This is why pastors do this.

Not because we are better than others or more pious, but because Jesus sends them out to do this, and His spirit goes with them and is given. It is wild that from that upper room, with ten and eleven hiding disciples behind locked doors, this word of forgiveness has been breathed and spoken throughout the world. It could have died there (and by any earthly amount of reason, it should have!), but the apostles went out without fear. Thomas apparently went all the way to India. They were changed by the Spirit, given them through the Words and breath of Christ.

Christ speaks today as well. Not by merely telling stories and information about Him but by proclaiming to all what He has done for us. Who would make up a religion where a risen lord could even be doubted? Better yet, this risen Lord is patient. Thomas says that he will never believe, and how long does Jesus wait? Eight days. Why didn't Jesus run to Thomas immediately and beg him to believe? Because He is not worried. He is patient. He is calm. He will do what is right and good. And so it will go for you. Take heart. Do not fear. The Peace of the risen Lord Jesus Christ is with you. Christ is risen! 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 Easter 2)

Monday - The Second Week of Easter

APRIL 17, 2023

Today's Reading: Acts 5:29-42

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 22:20-23:13; Luke 4:16-30

*But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.
Acts 5:29*

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! We hear quite a bit during the season from the book of Acts. On the second Sunday of Easter, Acts 5 speaks to us about the cost of confessing Christ. Peter and the apostles were rejected and even suffered for the confession of Christ. We might not have been imprisoned or beaten for confessing Christ, but that doesn't mean it will never happen. The extraordinary comfort we find in this reading is that the Church is an unstoppable force. Starting with Acts, people hear the Gospel and come to faith in Christ. People are being told of the freedom from sin; they receive Christ's fulfillment of the Law. The world hates this and is opposed to this, but Jesus says very clearly that the gates of hell will not overcome the church. However, that doesn't mean that the church won't be brought to the doorsteps of hell itself while here on earth. This is where we pick up Peter's response... "We must obey God rather than man." It is essential to see how bold of a statement this truly is. They just killed Jesus for doing the same thing; what's to stop them from doing the same to the apostles?

Here is where it gets exciting and compelling for the Christian faith. An opponent to the faith, Gamaliel, stands up and gives a speech about all the messiahs who had a following in recent years and that when they died, so did their following. These religious leaders knew that Jesus had risen from the dead, so some were trying to do whatever they could to stop the spreading of this message. But others did not want to be found on the side fighting against God. Gamaliel's words are profound "So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice,"

The church today might seem like it is in an uphill battle, and reality, it is. However, we can take heart that our forefathers in the faith, including the disciples, endured so much for the sake of the Gospel. As they lived and breathed out the life of Jesus, they were also taking up the cross of Jesus and living out His life in them. A life of opposition, a life of suffering, but also a life of rejoicing and endurance. He overcame death, and now all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him! His church will never fail! Christ is risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

As true as God's own Word is true, Not earth nor hell's satanic crew Against us shall prevail. Their might? A joke, a mere facade! God is with us and we with God — Our vict'ry cannot fail. (O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe, LSB 666:3)

Tuesday - The Second Week of Easter

APRIL 18, 2023

Today's Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 23:14-33; Luke 4:31-44

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Peter. 1:3

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! I love birthdays, especially when it's the birthday of one of my kids. I love the joy they get to see and celebrate and the memories and emotions I have of recalling the day they were born. We all have birthdays, but none of us can remember what that particular day was like. Not only that, none of us chose to be born (thanks be to God your parents went through with it!). Yet your birthday is not just a one-time-a-year event. When you think about it, every day you live, you get to live out your birthday! Peter said that God caused us to be born again today. We didn't do it. God did. It wasn't you "making your decision for Jesus," as though you could cause yourself to be born again. No, God caused us to be born again, and he did it through his life-giving Word. Later Peter writes in chapter 3, "Baptism now saves you." Jesus does the work for us as we are born again. And each day, you live out your Baptism as Jesus forgives you in the name of the triune God that gives Baptism its saving power!

This Baptism is also connected to Jesus's Resurrection, where scripture talks about him being the "firstborn" of the new creation. Your Baptism connects you to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Peter says just that. He says God "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Christ was dead, and now he is risen. And therein lies the decisive act in all of history. Christ's Resurrection from the dead gives substance to the excellent news, connects us to Christ in Holy Baptism, and forms the basis for the hope of our resurrection.

Just like our birthday, there will also be our death day. We do not die without hope the day we leave this earthly life. Peter tells us about this future in our text. He says we have been born again to a living hope, "to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." "Inheritance"—that is what you receive. God gives you the gift of an "imperishable" inheritance—it doesn't have an expiration date. An "undefiled" inheritance—nobody can mess with it. An "unfading" estate—that won't get weaker or watered down. And this inheritance is being "kept in heaven for you," where it will remain safe and secure. You have been born again to a living hope. Christ is risen!

Gracious Lord, we give you thanks that in Holy Baptism we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation. On our baptismal anniversary continue to bless us by your Word and Spirit that we faithfully keep the covenant into which we have been called, boldly confess our Savior and finally share with all your saints the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Prayer for Anniversary of a Baptism - modified - Lutheran Service Builder page 310

Wednesday - The Second Week of Easter

APRIL 19, 2023

Today's Reading: Luther's Small Catechism Table of Duties: The Fourth Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 24:1-18; Luke 5:1-16

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with a promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." Ephesians 6:1-3."

Luther's Table of Duties - the Fourth Commandment

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! I was blessed to have Christian parents who raised me in the church. However, I still rebelled against them as most kids do. The older I got, the dumber they seemed to me. It was always hard to hear my parents or pastor say, "do you remember the fourth commandment?" My response was usually an eye roll. You have heard it before, and you may have the same reactions. However, the Lord takes this commandment very seriously. It is no small thing that this commandment sits atop the second table of the ten commandments, which speak about loving our neighbor. Honoring and obeying God is always first, but the parents and all authorities always come second.

We are not only to love our parents but also we are to honor them. Honor is greater than love; this command still stands despite what we think of our parents or even their faults and sins. We are to honor and love our parents despite their failings and inadequacies. God commands that we obey our fathers as He is our Father. Fathers, likewise, are expected to be like our heavenly Father. After all, He is the origin of what it truly means to be a father. Fathers have a high calling from God to be in His stead in the family. St. Paul writes directly to fathers when he says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:1-4

Your parents are God's instruments, not to raise you as children but as adults. They are the masks of God in your life, and the only way they can fulfill this duty is by the grace of God given to them as well. Jesus forgives you for failing to love and honor them, and He also forgives your parents for failing to love and raise you according to His commands; in the end, that is what it means to live out your life with your parents and family. Living in the love Christ has first shown to us and living in His gifts he continually gives us in our parents. But always remember you as well are a tremendous gift to your parents. Christ is risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Our works cannot salvation gain; They merit only endless pain. Forgive us, Lord! To Christ we flee, Who pleads for us endlessly, Have mercy Lord! (These Are the Holy Ten Commands, LSB 581:12)

Thursday - The Second Week of Easter

APRIL 20, 2023

Today's Reading: Luke 5:1-11

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 25:1-22; Luke 5:1-11

And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Luke 5:4

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! The church, at all times, has longed to have new members joining the Body of Christ. Who doesn't love to see the church grow? It used to be that the church would evangelize through works of mercy and care for anyone in need. Today it seems as if we look for church members who won't cause problems, messy people, people who will volunteer more or even give more money. Jesus tells His disciples to "let down your nets for a catch" today. This image of Jesus is a familiar one to us. The disciples have tried fishing all night with no results. Jesus tells them to drop the nets in the heat of the day, and there is the miraculous fish catch. This imagery is given to us about the disciples who would become "fishers of men" for the church. However, Jesus doesn't fish for specific fish. He is not going over largemouth bass or walleye. He's not going for catfish; He wants them all. Jesus doesn't use a pole with line and bait; He uses a net. A net is something that brings everything together at once. Big fish, little fish, dying fish and newborn fish, predator fish, and prey fish, the list goes on and on. Watch a YouTube video of fishermen using nets in the sea. When the net comes up from the water, there is a massive variety of fish and creatures. The fishermen begin to sort out the fishing. Keep only what is good and throw out what is bad.

What we hear of in the miraculous fish catch today is the perfect picture of Jesus' church. Jesus does not mention what kind of fish He is looking for; none are to be cast aside. This seems crazy to us in the church. It might even seem irresponsible, uncomfortable, or even inconvenient for whom we want to see in the church. This is the initial call of the church. To seek and welcome the lost, the last, and the losers of life so that they might be redeemed and restored by Jesus just like us. But it's not enough to dump the net on the floor. Jesus also calls us to show mercy and love to all who enter His church's doors. This might seem daunting; it might seem uncomfortable or awkward, but remember that He has also sought you out. His blood has redeemed you. Blood that washes away your sins and pulses through your veins as you receive Him in the Holy Eucharist. Blood that strengthens you to welcome anyone caught up in the net of Jesus placed before His church. Christ is risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Grant, then, O God, Your will be done, That, when the church bells are ringing, Many in saving faith may come Where Christ His message is brining: "I know My own, My own know Me. You, not the world, My face shall see. My peace I leave with you. Amen." (Built on the Rock, LSB 645:5)

Friday - The Second Week of Easter

APRIL 21, 2023

Today's Reading: John 14:18-24

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 31:1-18; Luke 6:1-19

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. "Christ is Risen" John 14:18

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Amid a world of death and decay, it is straightforward to feel alone, lost and abandoned. The world doesn't have an answer for death, so many want to celebrate the life lived in the valley of the shadow of death. The world's inability to have an answer to end, the devil prowling around you like a roaring lion, and our over-confidence in ourselves leads us to despair and feel alone. Yet Jesus reminds us today, "I will not leave you as orphans." Jesus did not say that He will never leave us, but that He will not leave us... as orphans. To leave behind an orphan is to abandon a child, to give it up, and give up caring and loving for it. It used to be that the church took in orphans in communities. The church was not only told to pray for orphans but also to foster these children and care for them. A lower birth rate and an increase in the killing of unwanted children have led to fewer and fewer orphans around us. Yet there are still unwanted children, for whatever reason, and it's unsuitable for the children or the parents.

It is easy to feel that we have been left behind and forgotten, orphaned by the Lord. Has He forgotten us? Are we orphaned? He has left us for a time, but not as orphans. That is where the Resurrection of Jesus comes into full force—the world. It cannot give you an answer for death; it leaves you to your own devices and the temptations of the devil. We spend seven weeks during Easter to be reminded that because Christ is risen, we too shall rise. We will enter into that place our heavenly Father has prepared for us. This is why he tells his followers after Jesus' Resurrection, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father!" Now that He has ascended, and sent the Spirit, the Helper, we see Him in His fullness, not with mere eyes, but with great faith and love, enthroned as God and Man.

He has left us, not as orphans, but baptized, adopted children, given up, and abandoned by death! We live and shall live because He lives. Your heavenly Father has sent Christ as your Savior, Redeemer, and brother, and the Spirit reminds us that wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, there He is, all so that where He is, we may be found. Not found as orphans but beloved children. Christ is risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Now I will cling forever To Christ, my Savior true; My Lord will leave me never, Whate'er He passes through. He rends death's iron chain; He breaks through sin and pain; He shatters hell's dark thrall; I follow Him through all. (Awake, My Heart, with Gladness, LSB 467:6)

Saturday - The Second Week of Easter

APRIL 22, 2023

Today's Reading: Psalm 84:1-4; antiphon: Psalm 84:5

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 32:1-14 Luke 6:20-38

Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Psalm 84:4

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Christ is risen! In the Old Testament, the children of Israel were very familiar with where God was located. Psalm 84 celebrates the temple of God in Jerusalem. It begins, "How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of Heaven's Armies" (Ps. 84:1). This is a reference to the temple, as is made clear in the following verse: "I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the LORD" (Ps. 84:2). Moreover, the psalm-writer adds, "What joy for those who can live in your house, always singing your praises" (Ps. 84:4). Later in this Psalm we hear of the sheer joy of being in the temple versus anything in this world "A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else" (Ps. 84:10).

As we read this psalm today, we might pause and say, this is nice, but is there anything here for us? Where are God's courts today? Where is the temple for us today?

Many Christians today will emphasize that God's temple is now your heart. Ask Jesus into your heart, and He and His father will make it your temple. This leads to Christianity solely focusing on the individual and their prayers and devotions. Because God has made himself known to us in Christ, and because the Spirit of God.

Yet, Psalm 84 shows us that God's presence is not just for the individual but for the entire Body of Christ to participate together. This happens in the Divine Service, where Jesus meets us with His gifts of forgiveness, life, salvation, and heavenly presence. Jesus says, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it in three days." The temple for us today is the flesh of Jesus, that flesh that was crucified, resurrected, ascended, and given each Lord's day in the holy eucharist. Because Jesus is our living temple, He makes His home with us. In fact, according to the New Testament, the local church is the new temple of God: "Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple" (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Thus, Psalm 84 encourages us to celebrate the presence of the Lord Jesus as we gather with God's people. Jesus Christ, with His Word and Sacraments, is the ultimate dwelling place of God on earth, the Word made flesh. Through Christ, we dwell in the house of the Lord forever and sing His praises. Christ is risen! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

In His temple now behold Him; See the long-expected Lord! Ancient prophets had foretold him; God has now fulfilled His word. Now to praise Him, His redeemèd Shall break forth with one accord. (In His Temple Now Behold Him, LSB 519:1)

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

Unless otherwise noted, Biblical quotations are from the ESV.

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