



REFLECTIONS

**Pentecost -
The Fourth Saturday after Pentecost
June 8, 2025 - July 12, 2025**



JUNE 8 - JULY 12

This season's Reflections were written by

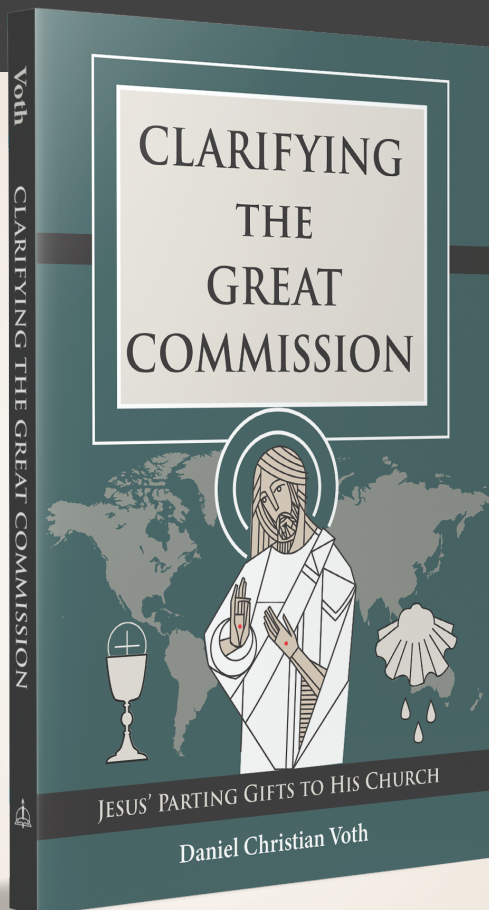
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DECIPHER CHRIST'S FAREWELL DISCOURSE



"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19–20)

In American Christianity, much has been lost in our understanding of this passage known as the Great Commission. In *Clarifying the Great Commission*, you'll discover this farewell discourse anew, not as a burdensome command but as a Gospel-filled promise. Included discussion questions aid in personal or group reflection.

Scripture: ESV®.

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A Short Form for Daily Reflection

ADAPTED FROM LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK

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 You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil 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 You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.

If it is evening, then go to sleep promptly and cheerfully.

Pentecost

JUNE 8, 2025

Today's Reading: John 14:23-31

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 21:10-35; Luke 21:20-38

"Jesus answered him, 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.'"
(John 14:23)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word." Faith, of course, is presupposed to the reader. I guess that's good. We assume Christians believe. But also, when we take faith for granted, all that's really left to talk about is what we want to come out of it. We assume the most important part of what Jesus said, then leave all of the stress on something that wasn't ever given to carry the weight. We focus on the word "keep." We stress the word keep when we're set against a society that doesn't keep it as if we can stave it off somehow by what we do. We stress it when our kids mess up, when we mess up, and when the world messes up because "whoever does not love me will not keep my word." And we even when nothing's messed up at all, we think we did that by keeping something and proved something by it.

Don't presuppose faith. See it for what it is. The gift of the Holy Spirit, who calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps you. Jesus is not describing the outcome of a presupposed faith. He's describing what faith looks like. Pentecost celebrates that. God wants to speak. He preaches through men by Gift of the Holy Spirit. He gives good Gifts to sinners. To you. To keep isn't measured in obedience. It's chiefly to treasure. By faith, we treasure the word God gives us, even when it paints us as sinners. Because it also tells us that Jesus saves sinners. Treasure that. Love what the world loves not. Love the cross and all that it brings. Love the place God put to death all evil and saved you from yourself. Love the life He gives that only comes on the other side of the tomb but already belongs to you in your Baptism. This is the peace the world cannot give.

We live forgiven, rooted in the Gifts of the Spirit, of the gospel which calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps, rejoicing in the promise Jesus makes, that you who love the Lord do treasure His word. The word speaks, and it shapes us. Each day, it forgives. Each day, it ties us to the great promise. Rise. Let us go from here.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, on this day You once taught the hearts of Your faithful people by sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit. Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy consolation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Pentecost Monday

JUNE 9, 2025

Today's Reading: John 3:16-21

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 22:1-20; Luke 22:1-23

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

If you unpack the Bible verse everyone already knows, you find a religion nobody can fathom. It's nothing but Jesus on the cross for sinners. It binds us together without distinction, without exception, and leaves us with a different vocabulary. All the world talks about what's wrong. All the world condemns. But Christ did not come into the world to condemn it, but in order that it would be saved through His cross. You don't need to make the world better or even make it seem that way. You can call darkness dark because you see the light that conquers it. Forgives you who walk in it. Brings light that darkness would not overcome it. Which means the only reason there's darkness left is because folks want it that way. The light came into the world, but the people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

It's easy to sort through now, especially with that cross. Shine light on everything. What is light reflects light. What is dark flees the light. Not just because Christians are good and the world is evil. That's the lie the devil would have us believe, so we won't know what to make of our sins and would flee from the God who'd crucify them, even if it means running back to darkness. But whoever comes to the light shows what light does. It forgives. This is the work carried out in God. Christians take their sins to the light. To the cross, so they're not afraid to call their sins darkness. They know where light conquered darkness. And they know it was for them. It was for you. The darkness that flees the light is the darkness that doesn't want to become light. That doesn't want forgiveness. Shine light on everything and watch Christians rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, and there is no greater light, for this is the work of God. This is the peace we have. To not worry so much about the darkness anymore. Don't be afraid of it. Don't worry about outrunning it or outfighting it. You are brought to the light. This is the work God carries out over and over for you. So you won't have to measure your light; you can look to His cross. You can know that it's yours every single day for every single dark thing.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, who gave Your Holy Spirit to the apostles, grant us that same Spirit that we may live in faith and abide in peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Pentecost Tuesday

JUNE 10, 2025

Today's Reading: John 10:1-10

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 22:21-23:3; Luke 22:24-46

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

When folks look around the sheepfold, it's a lot easier to find the robbers than the Lord. Jesus says, "The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy." That part, I see. That part we can't miss. The death. The destruction. The evil that doesn't just persist in a world of chance where storms and plagues come and go. There's the evils men do to each other. Sometimes even in the name of religion. Our Lord never contends the robbers being present. He warns us about them. Expect them. They're actually a sign you're in the right place. That He won't chase them out is the cause of all kinds of frustration, but He promises something even more peculiar.

Jesus doesn't stand back from what's wrong. He doesn't demand we earn His favor to fix it. He doesn't promise a perfect world. He promises the cross. He promises to come to the sheep. To rescue them. To carry the lost and bind up the wounded. He comes to make the dead live. He comes to bear the cross, not for the righteous, but for sinners. He came to die for you and for me. He came to be the lightning rod for everything wrong so we could finally stop pretending things were fine, blaming each other for what's wrong, and desperately trying to fix it without success. We cast each sin and evil upon the cross, where God bears them to the bitter end for us. And we hear the voice of the shepherd. It is finished. Your sins are forgiven you. Death is destroyed. And Jesus is risen from the grave.

Understand what the resurrection means. It is an apologetic of hope. Evil raged as hard as it could and still failed to keep Jesus dead. This is a religion carried forward on the backs of martyrs, not afraid to die because they saw someone prove it's not so permanent. They died alone and afraid. They saw what the robbers and thieves could do. And they sang hymns about the shepherd while they died at the hands of the thieves. And even here, Jesus leads them through the door. From the cross to the empty tomb. He rose. They live. And that's beautiful. And it's something that we can still hear today. The shepherd still speaks. He sends his undershepherds. They preach the gospel. There will still be others. Robbers. Don't hear them. They speak of not Jesus. But we'll sing hymns no matter what because the measure of our hope is still the voice of the risen shepherd.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, But yet in love He sought me And on His shoulder gently laid And home rejoicing brought me (LSB 709:3)

St. Barnabas, Apostle

JUNE 11, 2025

Today's Reading: Mark 6:7-13

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 23:4-28; Luke 22:47-71

"And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits." (Mark 6:7)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus sends the Twelve out to preach and cast out demons. They only get to take a staff. They stay where someone will put them up; if not, it's dust from their boots. They healed the sick and cast out demons. But when I look at this, for the life of me all I can think about is what they didn't have. No money, no clothes, no safety net. Maybe it's because I have a lot of junk, but really, it's because I can't imagine life that close to the brink. I want extra. All I can see are the wolves. The pitfalls. The problems. That fear has been the shift in missions. For so many congregations, it's ceased to be about getting other people's help and turned into making sure we survive. All we can see is what we don't have. Not enough people. Volunteers. Money. Programs. Kids. We paint a picture of a church on the brink of extension, complain about it, and then act shocked nobody else wants to join.

This is who Christ sends the Twelve out to. Sinners who don't trust God enough. Sinners assaulted by demons. Sinners who are sick and suffering. He's still sending. We're still more focused on what we don't have than what we do. And repentance and forgiveness of sins are still being preached. There is real peace. Real healing.

Some will not hear it. Some will not receive it with joy. The kingdom of God is still manifest in the voices of the preachers—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. God still uses the church to spread His word, which does not return empty. This is not what this church doesn't have. It's about what it does have. Peace. Jesus for sinners. The cross for you. What we have is precious. Worth praising. There's peace here. There's Christ here. Really here for you when everything else falls apart. When everything else is devoured, Christ will feed you, too. Everything the world is desperate for, we give away for free. And Christ is the one still doing the sending. The church grows by the power of the Holy Spirit. We couldn't stop it by our fear anymore than we could stop it by our sin. Christ forgives both. And the church endures. It will stand unto the last, ever calling out mercy. We'll abide in a land of not enough because Christ speaks peace to us here. And that's enough.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, Your Son, Jesus Christ, chose Bartholomew to be an apostle to preach the blessed Gospel. Grant that Your Church may love what he believed and preach what he taught; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Thursday of the Week of Pentecost

JUNE 12, 2025

Today's Reading: Genesis 11:1-9

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 24:1-25; Luke 23:1-25

"Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth." (Genesis 11:9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Everybody wants a perfect little life. We all have a picture of it. This is how it needs to be so I can be content, happy, whole, and safe. Everybody wants the Tower of Babel. Those people were on to something. Look, there is nothing they couldn't do. Until God showed up and kicked over their sandcastle. We've been trying to rebuild the thing ever since. Every campaign promise and every daydream – unity – progress – greatness – utopia. We still want Babel. Because we think, "Here is peace. Here is where good happens, where God would be."

Then, your own little Tower of Babel crumbles behind your unfulfilled dreams, your candidates are not living up to promises, and your home life turns upside down. So we sit down here in the mess, depressed, hopeless, because all our plans of building a tower to heaven fell apart. Here's the thing. Heaven isn't just "up". Which is good. If heaven is just "up," then we're always going to be just short of it. If you have to build up, there's no hope at the bottom. You see it in how amazing your lives are here compared to how many others, and yet how miserable you are. Here's why God muddled up our language. Here's why He won't just give you your daydreams of a perfect life. It's not enough. There's always more to climb, and heaven isn't just up.

He loves you too much to want you to spend your whole life with hope just out of reach. He didn't want you to think that a perfect life is the only place good things can happen. He isn't the kind of God who waits for us to figure out how to come up to Him. He comes down to us. Even us sinners. Us selfish, willing to climb over our neighbor in pursuit of our tower. Us idolaters, who find more hope in a new home than a living God. Us coveters, who ignore our lives as they play out in front of us to keep lists of things we want to buy. For everyone who builds and ends up shy of heaven. For everyone who finds out the hard way sin never actually builds up but only tears down. For me, for you, Christ descended. To die. To rise. To save. It means there's hope at the bottom. It means God won't stay away from the mess. Even on your worst day, Jesus can't be uncrucified. His promise is still true. It is finished.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Savior, rend the heavens wide; Come down, come down with mighty stride; Unlock the gates, the doors break down; Unbar the way to heaven's crown. (LSB 355:1)

Friday of the Week of Pentecost

JUNE 13, 2025

Today's Reading: Acts 2:1-21

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 27:12-23; Luke 23:26-56

*"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place."
(Acts 2:1)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus conquered death, and we figure everything's got to be different now. The Pharisees were still running the temple. Caiaphas still offered sacrifices there as High Priest, refusing to believe he had already sacrificed the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. The city was still under Roman occupation. The crowd still didn't do anyone any favors by paying attention to them. Remember who this crowd is. They cried for a revolution when Jesus rode into town on a donkey. They cried for a cross when He didn't deliver. On Pentecost, the Twelve didn't seek a crowd eager to hear them; the crowd heard a great noise and went to add to it. Pentecost wasn't the sanctioned and safe beginning of an enthusiastic church that took over the culture that we imagine.

We know the miracle of Pentecost—that tongues of fire danced over the apostles' heads while they preached in languages they never knew. The disciples were brought by God, not to preach to those who gathered together cheerfully after making all the right choices in the middle of it. They preached to the sinners who cried out for the death of God. They preached to the terrified. They preached to the confused who did their best and second-guessed it every step of the way. They preached to those who heard what God would call good and mocked it, then called the messengers drunk for it. They preached to us.

This is the crowd God sends preachers to. Peter preaches hope, not in an action plan for the future. Not in being on the side that made the right choices. Not even in being the ones who boycotted Target the first time things got weird. He preaches to the ones who put Jesus to death. He tells them Jesus died because of them and for them. Of the sins of all the sinners gathered that day, the selfishness, the arrogance, the anger, the idolatry are covered in the blood of God, which pays the price for the evil they work. The sinners are forgiven. The path forward is, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It gives a new identity. Every nation gathered in Jerusalem was given a new identity that joined them together. Baptized. Christian. Those who called upon the name of the Lord and were saved.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord, With all Your graces now outpoured On each believer's mind and heart; Your fervent love to them impart. Lord, by the brightness of Your light In holy faith Your Church unite; From ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue This to Your praise, O Lord, our God, be sung: Alleluia, alleluia! (LSB 497:1)

Saturday of the Week of Pentecost

JUNE 14, 2025

**Today's Reading: Introit for Trinity - Psalm 16:8-11; antiphon: Liturgical Text
Daily Lectionary: Numbers 32:1-6, 16-27; Luke 24:1-27**

Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity. Let us give glory to him because he has shown his mercy to us.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not revealed by God simply to confuse or imply that God isn't great at math. It's given that we may know that God draws near to save us. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three gods, but one God. And now God is not simply a being far away in heaven. Christ is God, who came to earth to die on the cross and conquer death. The Holy Spirit is God, who is present in word and sacrament in your church for you.

"I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

In the doctrine of the Trinity, the creed simply explains the introit. You know where to find God at your right hand. Place it in the font and know you're baptized, and as sure as water is wet, you have put on Christ and are saved (1 Peter 3). Because Christ is risen from the grave, your flesh dwells secure in the resurrection even now. God has promised it belongs to you as sure as you're baptized. You know the path of life. Through the grave and out again. To be at the communion of the saints is to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who have already passed through the veil and know pleasures forevermore.

Doctrine is heaven. Life is earth. But God uses His truth to confront the lives we live in sin, error, discord, labor, and sorrow with hope. The Trinity shows mercy to us sinners.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Triune God, be Thou our stay; O let us perish never! Cleanse us from our sins, we pray, And grant us life forever. Keep us from the evil one; Uphold our faith most holy, And let us trust Thee solely With humble hearts and lowly. Let us put God's armor on, With all true Christians running Our heav'nly race and shunning The devil's wiles and cunning. Amen, amen! This be done; So sing we, "Alleluia!" O Lord, have mercy on us. (LSB 505:1)

Holy Trinity

JUNE 15, 2025

Today's Reading: John 8:48-59

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 35:9-30; Acts 1:1-7:60; Luke 24:28-53

"Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.'" (John 8:58)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. It's weird how happy folks were that Abraham was dead. They prefer their patriarch dead to win a fight. They have something they think is more valuable. Wealth, stability, power, ego. They'll march over the bones of Abraham to keep it and quote the Bible while they do. Genesis 25:8. "Abraham breathed his last and died." Just... Without context. And so without the promise that He still lives. Hear Jesus' condemnation of them for what it is. We have the same idols. So when we see how happy the Jews are to have a dead Abraham if it means keeping their wealth and status, maybe we should be uncomfortable. It says plenty about our own priorities. More often than not, people's big issue with religion is not so much the idea of faith, but what it might mean. The Jews could convict Jesus of no sin yet called His teachings demonic. His greatest promise is also the biggest threat. They already have their king in Caesar. In wealth. If that has to be built over the bones of the patriarchs and the prophets, that's just called progress. But Jesus dares to ask. What if there's more than just this life? Progress? Wealth? Power? He promises something that cuts to the heart of everything that sinners would build. If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.

The scriptures point to a Jesus who wants to bear the cross to save sinners, not reward those who think well of themselves with happiness. That's great in theory, but as it turns out, that might clash with some of your plans. If God is actually here to give you that salvation, it calls into question why so many things seem to come before His word. Treasure God's word above all. But the thing about Christ is, even when He isn't our treasure, we are His. Time and time again, He shows up and promises life to people who have other things going on. To Abraham, who had country, lands, and family; to the Jews, who had wealth and status; and to you. Each time, His call isn't to have less, but more. Remember who Jesus is. Before Abraham was, I AM. He is the God who saved Abraham. Who spoke to Moses and called Himself I AM. A name so holy it was not spoken. That's why they tried to stone Him. Not because He said He was old. Because He said He was God. But even this is a gift. It gives remembrance of fulfilled promises past, and certainty that future ones will be fulfilled, too. To what He must do for you. Die. Rise. Save. Abraham rejoiced to see this day because he was saved by Christ. Brought through death to life. That's yours, too. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, You have given us grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confession of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities; for You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and forever.

Monday of the Week of Holy Trinity

JUNE 16, 2025

Today's Reading: Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 16:1-24; John 16:1-16

"To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man." (Proverbs 8:4)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

There is an eternal Wisdom, begotten yet in existence before anything was. That's kinda hard to get one's head around. This Wisdom, involved in creation, is called a she by one known for wisdom. Which is kinda hard to get one's head around. I honestly think the weirdest part of it all is that this Wisdom who found such joy in creation actually wants to call out to us who wrecked it with sin. Wisdom calls to us.

To untangle the web, we run to the simpler, less weird stuff when Scripture gets too weird. Scripture interprets Scripture. If our interpretation of Scripture from Scripture disagrees with the Nicene Creed, we messed up somewhere and made a heresy instead. That's bad. Let's start with the simplest stuff. God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to die on the cross and rise from the dead to save you from your sins. This Jesus is God of God, light of light, very God of very God. God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. The cross was never a plan B. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This all means there is a pre-incarnate Christ. Before Christmas, the second person of the Trinity was still active. His will was always to save sinners. Before the foundation of the world, the Lamb was slain.

All this isn't just to wrinkle your brain at God being more complicated than we can understand. All this is to wrinkle your brain at God being simpler than we can comprehend. He loves you. Nothing you do can change that. He who made you in love knew you would sin, rebel, and hurt not only yourself but the rest of His creation, His children. He still loves you with unchanging and unchangeable love. This love was manifest when He died on the cross to bear your sins to save you. But if all the past can't change His love, it also means the future can't either. Number yourselves among those saved by the Wisdom that calls out to man in love.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Creator of the stars of night, Thy people's everlasting Light: O Christ, Redeemer, save us all And hear Thy servants when they call. (LSB 351:1)

Tuesday of the Week of Holy Trinity

JUNE 17, 2025

Today's Reading: Acts 2:14a, 22-36

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 17:1-28; Proverbs 18:1-20:4; John 16:17-33

"this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." (Acts 2:23-24)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Peter preaches the best sermon I've ever heard. Jesus saves sinners. You're sinners. It's beautiful in its simplicity, but it completely shapes how to read the Old Testament. The plan and foreknowledge of God was to crucify the Son. For all the prophesy we look through in the Old Testament to find fulfilled in Jesus, there should be no surprise that Jesus dies and rises. David says concerning Him, "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life..." (Psalm 16:10-11) Through the cross. Out of the tomb. No other conclusion was possible. David spoke about the resurrection of Christ as if it was a given, even though it hadn't played itself out in time yet. The resurrection was a given. All the sins are atoned for. The wages of sin is death. So there can be no more death. Of course, there's a resurrection.

This Jesus, you crucified, too. Foretold in the Old Testament, He bore your sins. Had there been no David, no Moses, no Patriarchs or faithful kings, Christ would have chosen to save you by bearing the same cross. It's a truth we know. But it also means the Old Testament is for you. Read it to find Jesus there. It's more than just a history of what happened before Christianity. It is the religion of all who have faith in the triune living God. The same religion. The same hope. The forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. That's yours now, too, because this Jesus, whom you crucified, is risen.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus lives! The vict'ry's won! Death no longer can appall me; Jesus lives! Death's reign is done! From the grave will Christ recall me. Brighter scenes will then commence; This shall be my confidence. (LSB 490:1)

Wednesday of the Week of Holy Trinity

JUNE 18, 2025

Today's Reading: John 17:1-26

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 20:5-25; Proverbs 21:1-31; John 17:1-26

"When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you," (John 17:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you." The hour has finally come for the Son to be glorified. Apparently, that wasn't when 5000 folks were willing to follow Him days out into the middle of nowhere just to listen to Him talk. Or in feeding all of them with five loaves of bread and two fish. Or in the water turned into wine that made Jesus the hero of the party. Or in walking on water. Or in the calming of the storm. Or in resisting the devil in the wilderness in a 40 day trial of wills. Jesus wasn't glorified in making everything look easy. He wasn't glorified in power. The hour where the Son of God was glorified was about the third hour, as He hung from the cross to be mocked by His enemies. Not in strength, but weakness. Not in being admired, but humiliated. Not in the things the world respects and we sinners covet, but as He was despised and we esteemed Him not. When He was stricken, smitten, and afflicted for you. There, He won for you eternal life. There, He reveals something of God we'd never otherwise see. Because that's what glory really means.

Glory is a loaded word in the Bible. It doesn't just mean cool stuff. When the Bible says glory, it's a word for God's presence. It means God is actually there. The glory of the Lord is the presence of the Lord. So when angel choirs sang "glory to God in the highest" to shepherds, it was because God was present on earth, lying in a manger. When the glory of the Lord dwelt on Sinai, and a cloud covered it, and Moses entered the cloud, it was to talk to God who was present there. Where God locates Himself, His glory shines. God can work everywhere and anywhere, but that His glory shines in certain places means these are where He works with purpose for you.

The Son was glorified on the cross, and the word glory takes a new shape. This is where God wants to be present, not just everywhere, but for you. Not just in power, but in mercy. This is where the fullness of His will is revealed. Look at the Son of God suffer for you. He bears your sins. He bears your weakness today. And He wins for you a victory that none of these things can rob from you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Go to dark Gethsemane, All who feel the tempter's pow'r;
Your Redeemer's conflict see, Watch with Him one bitter hour;
Turn not from His griefs away; Learn from Jesus Christ to pray. (LSB 436:1)*

Thursday of the Week of Holy Trinity

JUNE 19, 2025

Today's Reading: Catechism: The Lord's Prayer - The Seventh Petition
Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 22:1-21; John 18:1-14

But deliver us from evil.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

It's dark down here. There's a lot of evil in the world. It's one of the rare places we can agree with the atheists. The difference is that we can find an evil one, the devil, stirring the pot. We can label the roots of so many of the evil things men do to each other in the 10 Commandments. Even if you don't know the name of it, though, the prayer stands. We want to be free from it. Deliver us from evil. Deliver us from everything that works for our harm under the kingdom of Satan.

We pray in this Petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

If you make this a future event, Christianity becomes nothing more than a race to the end, which is why so many Christians talk about life in heaven more than life today. If you see God delivering you from evil everywhere His name is hallowed, everywhere His kingdom is manifest, and everywhere His will is done, there can be comfort today, too. You were delivered from evil where God has brought you His holy name and given You His Holy Spirit. You can find deliverance from evil in God's church. Here, your sins are forgiven, and you are given an identity not rooted in shame and vice. Here, you are tied to the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting in a way that even the prince of this world cannot undo.

Here, you are kept safe and secure until, at last, you join the church triumphant at rest. In all of it, the comfort lies in the source of deliverance, not the distance you happen to be from the evil. God remains the source of every good, even in the face of death. He has already worked a blessed end for you upon the cross, that even in the darkest of days when evil seems to pervade everything, you can look to your victory in Christ's death and find certainty that you are already delivered. The difference between the church triumphant and the church militant, the saints in heaven and the saints on earth, isn't that one has been finally delivered, and the other doesn't get that yet. All of us are delivered from evil; it's just that some of us who are at rest can see it a little clearer.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

From evil, Lord, deliver us; The times and days are perilous. Redeem us from eternal death, And, when we yield our dying breath, Console us, grant us calm release, And take our souls to You in peace. (LSB 766:8)

Friday of the Week of Holy Trinity

JUNE 20, 2025

Today's Reading: John 18:15-40

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 22:22-23:12; John 18:15-40

"The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him, 'I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret.'" (John 18:19-20)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Nobody pays attention to statistics. Something in us refuses to see ourselves with the crowds. We are always the outlier. People who live together before calling themselves married are 33% more likely to get divorced. 94% of teen drivers acknowledge the dangers of texting and driving, but 35% admitted to doing it anyway, and 21% of teen drivers involved in fatal accidents were distracted by their cell phones. Fine. Maybe. But... not me.

So, we tell stories. That's the way to make people identify with what's going on. The mother who didn't abort. The refugee family struggling to make ends meet. We find ourselves in these people. Compassion takes over. They become souls, not numbers. And when it comes to this story, we know it so well, and more, we can see ourselves in it. Who hasn't been wrongfully accused? Taken issue with the government? Been betrayed? Abused? Humiliated? Who hasn't suffered? Of course, we see ourselves with Jesus. Technically, we know everyone's a sinner, and I know I'm not perfect, but if you saw what we do in context, you'd know that we always have a reason. You only steal from work because they don't pay you enough. You only yell because you've said it 100 times, and nobody listened. You only gossip because pretty sure it's true. You only spend every day self-indulging because of how unfair the world is. All of us have our reasons, and they become our everything. It's there that we can finally see ourselves in the scriptures. Jesus gave no excuses. It's everyone around Him. If you want to see your reflection in the story, look to Barabbas, the insurrectionist. The freedom fighter. Independence lover. Murderer. But if you knew why, you'd understand. Convinced he rebelled for all the right reasons, he self-justified.

Look at Barabbas and know the truth: sin will always mask itself under the guise of righteousness. We will always find excuses for the ones we care about, most of all for ourselves. And so the crowds let Barabbas go free and cried to Crucify our Lord. The self-justifier is always easier to deal with in the long run than the brutally honest. If you want to find yourself in the scriptures, here you are. Barabbas is all of us. The sinner that goes free because Jesus is crucified. Jesus goes in his stead to be stricken, smitten, and afflicted. By Jesus' wounds, even Barabbas is saved. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth, The guilt of sinners bearing And, laden with the sins of earth, None else the burden sharing; Goes patient on, grows weak and faint, To slaughter led without complaint, That spotless life to offer, He bears the stripes, the wounds, the lies, The mockery, and yet replies, "All this I gladly suffer." (LSB 438:1)

Saturday of the Week of Holy Trinity

JUNE 21, 2025

Today's Reading: Introit for Pentecost 2 - Psalm 71:20-24; antiphon: Psalm 71:3
Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 24:1-22; John 19:1-22

"You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again." (Psalm 71:20)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The psalmist sees something beautiful. God caused him to see troubles. Thanks for the calamities, Jesus! I will sing praises to you with the lyre. It's hard to pray that without a sarcastic tone of voice. But it's at least honest. If God is in control of all things, that includes the disasters. The stuff we tend to blame on others. They who sought to do me hurt have been put to shame. Because God did a way better job at it. He chastises in a way that absolutely gets my attention. It leaves all my idols in shambles around me, and every hope I've built, not in Him, crumbled to dust. And that's beautiful, too, even if I hate it.

The psalmist, in great faith, finds joy in a God who works all things for good, even the painful ones. Because it doesn't stop with the hurt, the trouble, the tragedy, or the death. There's a resurrection. You can know it for sure. Jesus did it first. He willingly bore the troubles and calamities. He willingly bore the cross. He did it for you, to save you. He rose from the grave and, in doing so, has proved that death is no longer permanent. Because Christ is risen, you will rise. It's beautiful because now we don't need to run anymore. The way is forward, never away. Through the tomb and out again. Fear not the terrors of the world. That's way better than spending your whole life running from bad things.

They who sought to do me hurt have been put to shame because you can't stay dead. You can't stay hurt. The Lord, who has made me see many troubles and calamities, will revive me again. God brings about some things we hate. We're still allowed to hate them at the end of the psalm. But now we also have the victory, and so also the character of God. He doesn't bring trouble in wrath. That's finished on the cross. What He does to you is never arbitrary; the cross shows His love for you. Now, even trouble bears a promise. More than just an excuse as to why it happened, God leaves you with a present victory over it. From the depths of the earth, you will bring me up again.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The will of God is always best And shall be done forever; And they who trust in Him are blest; He will forsake them never. He helps indeed In time of need; He chastens with forbearing. They who depend On God, their friend, Shall not be left despairing. (LSB 758:1)

Second Sunday After Pentecost

JUNE 22, 2025

Today's Reading: Luke 8:26-39

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 25:1-22; Proverbs 26:1-28; John 19:23-42

"Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned." (Luke 8:37)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus and His disciples have arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The storm has been calmed, but the disciples' unbelief is less calm. Immediately as Jesus stepped out on land, He was met with an accusation. A man possessed with many demons cries out to Him, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me" (v. 28). Jesus, the calmer of storms, the Lord of all creation, yes; but Jesus the tormentor?

The demons do what the disciples do not and openly confess who Jesus is, yet this is not a confession of faith. It is a confession of fear and an attempt to take Jesus away from why He came in the first place.

So Jesus, Lord of all creation, deals with the demons as He did with the storm. "For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man" (v.29). Jesus, the word made flesh, commands even the demons. At this point, the legion can only submit and beg for mercy. Jesus accommodates them only to send them into pigs, which are then driven into the lake to drown.

All the people of this Gentile country are astonished, and yet their unbelief manifests in fear as they ask Jesus to depart from them.

Fear not. Fear not the storms of this life; fear not the devil who prowls around, seeking to devour you. Fear not the world whose unbelief fears an almighty God. Fear not, because this almighty God cares for you, just as He cared for those around Him.

Jesus doesn't just command creation for His own glory; He sets His glory aside to restore all creation. Jesus doesn't command demons to show His sovereignty. Rather, His sovereignty is revealed by the throne to which He will ascend and reveal Himself as the Son of the Most High God, who dies for you.

Jesus, the Son, Who takes all the unbelief, the fear, and the doubt, and by His death and resurrection makes all things new. He makes you new; He makes you His, just like He the man in the Gerasenes His. We do not fear but believe and proclaim all that God has done for us.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, You have prepared for those who love You such good things as surpass our understanding. Cast out all sins and evil desires from us, and pour into our hearts Your Holy Spirit to guide us into all blessedness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

Monday of the Second Week After Pentecost

JUNE 23, 2025

Today's Reading: Isaiah 65:1-9

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 27:1-24; Proverbs 28:1-29:27; John 20:1-18

"I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, and from Judah possessors of my mountains; my chosen shall possess it, and my servants shall dwell there." (Isaiah 65:9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Israel's children had no idea how good they had it, and they had it all. They thought it would last forever. After all, they have everything going for them that the world did not. They had Abraham as their father; they had the temple, and, oh yeah, God had already prevented Assyria from overtaking them (Isaiah 37). They took the presence of God and the blessing of being the people who bear His Name for granted. It was a band-aid over the gash of their idolatry. God says no more. Assyria will come and take Israel away; the sins of the fathers and the children will be accounted for.

It's easy to belittle the children of Israel. To measure them against God's law, as God Himself does. We see the specks of sin in everybody, yet we don't see the log in our own eyes. Maybe life hasn't been easy lately, and you're mad at God about that. Perhaps you think that you deserve more and that God would want you to be happy. We can be rebellious people and take God for granted, too. In fact, we can fall into the sins of our fathers and tell ourselves our own sins are fine because God will make it all okay anyway. And yet God does not abandon His people, even when they are unfaithful or when they take Him for granted. Israel is hauled away by Assyria. Judah, to Babylon. Sin has consequences. The band-aid is ripped off so that the wound might be cared for properly.

God sends an offspring from Jacob's son Judah—His own Son to be the one who bears the crushing weight of the Law and its punishment for our unfaithfulness. He does this so that we might repent from our idolatry and believe that God is faithful even when we are not. We cling to His Son Jesus. We endure the consequences of our actions, the effects of living in a fallen sinful world. Do not think that because of this, your God has forgotten you.

In Jesus, you have it all. Not in a worldly reflection of wealth and happiness but in a way that the suffering and sadness of this life cannot overcome. In the waters of Baptism, we are washed and given the garments of salvation—a new identity, united to Jesus' death and resurrection, bringing us back to our Father, whole and content. We receive our daily bread from our Father's hand, living in this world strengthened by the God who gives us everything without any merit or worthiness in me.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Chief of sinners though I be, Christ is all in all to me; All my wants to Him are known, All my sorrows are His own. He sustains the hidden life Safe with Him from earthly strife. (LSB 611:4)

Nativity of St. John the Baptist

JUNE 24, 2025

Today's Reading: Luke 1:57-80

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 30:1-9, 18-33; John 20:19-31

"And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God." (Luke 1:64)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Zechariah's troubling visitation has been resolved. A birth of Abrahamic proportions has occurred. Elizabeth, who was once barren, has now given birth to John. Zechariah obeys the words preached to Him by the angel, and with his mouth opened, he praises God. John isn't your typical child. I mean, he was born like any other child and raised like the other children around him. John was different, though; Zechariah tells us as much. God has made Elizabeth's barrenness bear the forerunner of Christ. God has visited His people. John's birth and the opening of Luke's Gospel are grand, but they are about to be overshadowed. The song of Zechariah gives thanks for his son, John the Baptist, and tells us how God will use John. More to the point of John's life, though, it tells us who John the Baptist is setting up.

John is the voice crying out in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord, calling God's people to repentance, and unmasking the vipers of the religious elite. Zechariah boldly proclaims that God has visited His people. The one who will follow His son, John, is the one who will redeem them. He is of the house of His servant David, who will bring salvation and show God's mercy, which was promised to their fathers. John the Baptist, the last prophet of the Most High, prepared the way for His Lord, calling sinners to repent and believe in the one who comes after Him: Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

John the Baptist wasn't just a miracle child or just a wild man in the wilderness. He was God's prophet, pointing God's people to where their sins would be forgiven, where their salvation would be secure, and where God's mercy would be revealed. God is still doing this work for you through His preachers so that you might know that God has visited His people and redeemed them through the One John the Baptist points to and the One of whom Zechariah sings. Thanks be to God for John the Baptist, the forerunner, who prepared the way for our Lord to be the Lamb of God who brings salvation and righteousness to all who believe in Him.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, through John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, You once proclaimed salvation. Now grant that we may know this salvation and serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Wednesday of the Second Week After Pentecost

JUNE 25, 2025

Today's Reading: Galatians 3:23-4:7

Daily Lectionary: Proverbs 31:10-31; John 21:1-25

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." (Galatians 4:4-5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Did Paul just say I don't need to listen to my parents anymore?

No-no. Paul said we don't need to live captive under the Law anymore.

What does that mean? For us foolish Galatians, it means we must stop trying to make the Christian life a life under the Law. Jesus did that for you. Jesus was born under the Law and perfectly fulfilled it. There is nothing that you and I could do to make that better. In fact, to do so would be to reject what Jesus has done and accomplished for us.

This is what Paul is trying to make absolutely clear to the Galatians. You are free from the Law and its guardianship. You are freed by the one who fulfills the Law. Jesus' obedience to the will of His Father, even to the point of death, is given to you as a Gift. We are purely passive in this.

How can you be sure of this? You are baptized. In your Baptism, when those words were proclaimed and the water was poured, you were no longer a slave of the law but a son of God. You are a son by faith and an heir of eternal life. There is no reason to return to the Law to establish yourself before God. God has put His Name upon you and claimed you as His beloved child, who He sent His Son Jesus to die for.

There is no partiality here, not to the Jew or the Greek. To the man or woman. For we are all one and are free to be in Christ Jesus.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

In Baptism we now put on Christ—Our shame is fully covered With all that He once sacrificed And freely for us suffered. For here the flood of His own blood Now makes us holy, right, and good Before our heav'nly Father. (LSB 596:4)

Thursday of the Second Week After Pentecost

JUNE 26, 2025

Today's Reading: Catechism: The Lord's Prayer - The Conclusion

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 1:1-18; Acts 8:1-25

This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; (The Lord's Prayer - The Conclusion - What does this mean?)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Have you ever thought, "What if God doesn't like what I pray for?" or "Does God really hear my prayers?"

Don't worry—you're not alone. Doubting whether or not God hears our prayers or answers them is what Dr. Luther is getting at in his meaning for the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. God commands us to pray. Not in a "do it or else" kind of command. God invites us to pray to Him just as you would ask your parents for things you want or need.

Your heavenly Father desires to give you all that you need in this life. That doesn't mean that every petition will be "Yes." God's "no" is good. We might not be content with that wherever we are in life at that time. But know this: God's "no" is not disappointment in you or your prayers. If something is bothering you, or if there is something you want more than anything, pray that God would give it to you if He wills. If you can't think of what to pray for, pray the Lord's Prayer; it is the prayer for the baptized Christian that teaches us how to pray.

Trust that the Father hears your prayers, and be comforted that you have the Son and the Holy Spirit interceding for you. God continues to give you daily bread and care for you in your daily life against sin, death, and the devil.

Remember your Amen. Amen is that final word where you confess that this is your prayer and that you know that your Father in heaven hears it and will answer it just as He has promised.

God truly hears your prayers, and your heavenly Father invites you, His child, to pray for Him about everything. We give thanks to God that we can come to Him in prayer and that He sees you as His dear children.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Friday of the Second Week After Pentecost

JUNE 27, 2025

Today's Reading: Acts 8:26-40

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 2:1-24; Acts 8:26-40

"And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." (Acts 8:38)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The Ethiopian Eunuch was missing something. He had worship; He had the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (Is. 53), and yet it did not make sense to him.

Now, to be clear, Philip is not the pastor who can unlock the secrets of Scripture with his wicked interpretation skills. Philip is the pastor who gets to proclaim the key to all the scriptures—the key that opened up the scriptures to Philip and all the disciples. This key, of course, is that perfect Sunday School answer type of key. I'm talking about Jesus!

Philip, brought by the Spirit, had to be ecstatic when he saw he could talk to this guy about Jesus. The eunuch hears the Gospel. He hears of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who was led to the slaughter and did not say a word. That Jesus who died for sinners by taking their sin and making them His own. The Lamb Jesus who silently takes our punishment that brought us peace, and by His wounds, we are healed.

This Gospel, the Good News that God justifies sinners by the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus, is that Word of the Lord that does not return empty. The Holy Spirit, through Philip, the pastor, preaches the Gospel that creates faith in the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Then, water comes into the scene. Faith and Baptism go hand in hand. The Holy Spirit works faith by the hearing of the Word, and the Word that works faith is joined to the waters of Baptism. The eunuch understood and was brought to faith by the work of the Holy Spirit who called him by the Gospel. That faith in Christ saves, and he wanted to be united to the Word made flesh that went like a lamb to the slaughter to save Him. Philip, the pastor, baptizes him, and the rest is history.

Rejoice in the daily reality of your Baptism, where the Holy Spirit created faith in you, and in those words and promises of God in and with the water, you were united to Christ, your Savior. Surely as He died, you died. Surely as He has risen from the dead, so you also will rise again.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

It sets the Lamb before our eyes, Who made the atoning sacrifice, And calls the souls with guilt oppressed To come and find eternal rest. (LSB 580:2)

Saturday of the Second Week After Pentecost

JUNE 28, 2025

Today's Reading: Introit for Pentecost 3 - Psalm 85:8-10, 13; antiphon: Psalm 85:7
Daily Lectionary: Joshua 3:1-17; Acts 9:1-22

"Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation." (Psalm 85:7)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

When God feels far away, how would you pray to Him? What do I do when God is angry with me?

The sons of Korah ask these questions of God in Psalm 85. Israel has endured the exile, and no one wants to endure that again. The future looks unclear, and history shows that for Israel the days of David and Solomon were not coming back. Life can be equally as anxious for us. Times have changed. Friendships come and go. Relationships end. Opportunities we hoped for never turn out, and life never seems to slow down. It can seem like we never quite have a handle on things. The life of the Psalmist and for the people of Israel was not about getting the upper hand. It certainly was not about going back to how things used to be, no matter how grand they appeared. We often romanticize the past and hold on to nostalgia. Those days aren't coming back, though. The life of the Psalmist is knowing where our peace and salvation come from. It comes from God Himself. Israel was passed around like a nobody to the nations. It wasn't that they didn't deserve it; it was that they did, and God heard their cries, remembered His promises, and brought them back.

You may be mourning a loved one, unsure of where to go next in life, or suffering from illness in the mind and body. When you reach the edge where doubt is near, and God feels far away, remember what the sons of Korah demanded of God. "Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation." You have a God who loves you and sent His Son to die for you. Whose word tells you the steadfast love God has for you through our Lord Jesus. In Jesus, your salvation is near—it is yours. It's not a matter of what I have to do to earn it, but a matter of your sins being forgiven. Nothing will take you away from the love your Father has for you. Not political uncertainties, not momentary crises of life, not sickness, and not death. God's salvation is revealed to you in your crucified, risen, and ascended Lord Jesus. You have your Baptism to remind you of that day you were made a child of God—united to your Savior so that as you endure these final things in these last days, you find comfort in the Word, knowing your identity is sealed in the water. You are strengthened in the eating and drinking of His Body and Blood under the bread and wine. Come, Lord Jesus.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles

JUNE 29, 2025

Today's Reading: Matthew 16:13-19

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 4:1-24; Acts 9:23-43

"Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" (Matthew 16:16)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What's the point of Peter's confession? He gets it right. Jesus is not just a reincarnated Moses or Elijah. He's not just another religious figure with good ideas on how to be kind to one another. Jesus asks His disciples, "Who am I?" not to trap them but to reveal to them who He is.

Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the one all of Scripture points to as the one who will save and deliver God's people. There's more to it than that, though, more to Peter's confession than even Peter realizes.

This confession is one that is seen with eyes of faith. It's the confession that the church, the baptized community, makes every Sunday in the Creed. It is your and my confession when we remember our baptisms: that we are united to Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God who saved us from our sins.

Peter is not handed the keys to the "pope mobile" here to guide the church in confessing. No, friends, this is the beginning of Peter's confession—or rather, his struggle against his own flesh to continue to confess boldly in season and out of season.

And then there's Paul. Paul is the persecutor turned pastor to the Gentiles, whose ministry is defined by suffering as Jesus suffered, for the sake of the Gospel and being content in all things. Paul's confession was all things to all people. Not sacrificing the substance or truth, but truly embodying that Christ Jesus, the Son of the Living God, came into the world to save sinners "of whom I am the foremost" (1 Timothy 1:15).

Confession of who Jesus is matters. He's not Moses or Elijah or John the Baptist. He is the Christ who took on our flesh and came into the world. The Son of the Living God to save you that this might be revealed to all who hear His Word and open their eyes of faith as Peter's and Paul's were. When you stand and confess the Creed, you see those witnesses around you but know that there's a whole host of witnesses saying it who have gone before you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Merciful and eternal God, Your holy apostles Peter and Paul received grace and strength to lay down their lives for the sake of your Son. Strengthen us by your Holy Spirit that we may confess Your truth and at all times be ready to lay down our lives for the one who laid down His life for us, even Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Monday of the Third Week After Pentecost

JUNE 30, 2025

Today's Reading: 1 Kings 19:9b-21

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 5:1-6:5; Acts 10:1-17

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

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"What are you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah is at the end of his rope. He's been a good and faithful servant. He outran his persecutors, cared for a widow and her son, and even performed miracles. The boxes on his prophet to-do list are nearly all checked off. You can imagine what he must have been thinking, after the lengths he had gone to approach God on Mt. Horeb, for God to say, "What are you doing here?" Elijah makes his case for retirement. Telling God that He's fought the good fight, run the race, and can't go on any longer. Yet, in that silly question God asks Elijah, we see that God is not done with his prophet. There's more to do. Just as Elijah was jealous for the Lord, the Lord is jealous for His people. Elijah's work is not finished. There are still words to proclaim, people to serve, and places to bring the Word of the Lord. Elijah is not alone. There is a faithful remnant—a remnant that he must go to so he may pass on his mantle to the next prophet who will serve them. Life can be overwhelming, and we, too, can feel like Elijah did in this world. Take comfort and know that even Elijah was alone and desired nothing more than the end of his ministry to God's people and, quite frankly, the end of his life. God heard him and answered him—not in mighty acts and wonders, not in the natural world around him, but God answered Elijah and comforted him with a word.

In the same way, God comes to you in your distress with His living and active word. God's "What are you doing here?" is that extraction that God does all too well. It leads Elijah to confess his sins, worries, doubts, and anxieties. God hears them, acknowledges them, and proclaims to him the Absolution. The same is true for you. God sends you your pastor so that you might go to him as often as you are jealous for that Word of God as Elijah was, that you would confess your sins that burden you to him, and he would proclaim that Absolution that your sins are forgiven. He reminds you that you are a child of God whom your heavenly Father loves. You can rest in the arms of their crucified and risen Savior. Elijah would go and find Elisha and continue the work God had for him. God is with you and is present in His Word, in your Baptism, and in His Supper. As often as you have need, if you ever doubt, remember your sins are forgiven and covered in the blood of Jesus. God sees you—yes, you who are standing before Him, and doesn't say, "What are you doing here?" but instead says, "This is my beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Tuesday of the Third Week After Pentecost

JULY 1, 2025

Today's Reading: Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 6:6-27; Acts 10:18-33

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The Galatians just couldn't quit the Law cold turkey. They needed a fix, something to claim as theirs, and God would understand, right? God can't really be the one who does it all—the one who forgives all my sins and sets me free—certainly not my sins. There has to be more. I have to do something. I must be the author of my salvation.

Dear friends, stand firm as St. Paul says and do not submit again to the Law and its yoke of slavery.

Your sins may be great, or many, or awful. You may tell yourself you are unforgivable, unlovable, and unworthy. The truth is, I am all of those things. We are poor, miserable sinners who, under the Law, are bound to its yoke and punishment.

Christ has set you free. Your sins are forgiven. There is nothing left for you to do. Your life under Christ is not because of any work you have done; this freedom is applied to you. It was applied to you in the waters of your Baptism, where your sinful man died to the Law, and the New Man emerged. You live each day in that baptismal grace, dying and rising to new life, free in Christ to love God and love your neighbor.

Living in that daily reality, facing that daily struggle, you will fall. We all do. Living by the Spirit points us back to the one who frees us, Christ Himself, so that we do not curve into ourselves and seek a yoke of slavery. Instead, we see Christ, and we hear the Absolution: "Your sins are forgiven, you are free. Go and sin no more."

Living the baptized life, the Spirit produces those fruits St. Paul speaks of above within you. You share them with your neighbor, not for a fix, not out of obligation to any yoke, but out of love that comes purely from freedom in Christ.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Holy Spirit, ever living As the Church's very life; Holy Spirit, ever striving Through us in a ceaseless strife; Holy Spirit, ever forming In the Church the mind of Christ; You we praise with endless worship For your gifts and fruits unpriced. (LSB 650:2)

Wednesday of the Third Week After Pentecost

JULY 2, 2025

Today's Reading: Luke 9:51-62

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 7:1-26; Acts 10:34-48

"And Jesus said to him, 'Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'" (Luke 9:60)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus has set His face toward Jerusalem, fully intent on His procession to Golgotha. The Samaritans refuse to accommodate Jesus and His disciples on account of His unwillingness to take His face from Jerusalem. James and John seek vengeance. This is Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. How dare some Samaritans deal with Him this way! But Jesus calls no fire and brimstone and instead rebukes them, and they go elsewhere. Still on the road, Jesus encounters three men eager to follow Him. The answers Jesus gives seem harsh, but they serve a point. Jesus was moving and orienting Himself towards Jerusalem—not for political gain or religious zeal, but to walk into Jerusalem to die.

This world had no place that could receive Jesus from His purpose in Jerusalem. These three men wanted to follow Jesus for their own gain, and for the sake of following Jesus, the man who does the miracles, speaks with authority, and puts the religious rulers in their place. Jesus is more than just a man; He's the Son of God, who leaves behind His Father, His glory, and any place to rest His head. Jesus leaves it all behind because that's not why He took on our flesh and came into this world. Thanks be to God for that.

The disciples James and John show the shallow depth of their discipleship at this point, which, by the time they reach Jerusalem, won't be any better. The 72 will be down to Twelve, but all Twelve will abandon the One. Jesus is the One who leaves the world, fulfills the Law to the will of His Father, and instead of taking what is His, He takes what is rightfully ours—our shame, our sin, our death, and punishment—and takes it up with Him on the cross at Golgotha.

On that cursed tree, Jesus, seeing all that He had done, finally breathed His last and laid His head to rest. Jesus presses on toward Jerusalem, toward the cross, where we today rejoice in the cross that leads to the empty tomb. We rejoice that we can find our rest in Him who had no place to rest His head, who gives His body for the feast. It is His very crucified, risen, and ascended body that we are united to in our baptisms. May we all lay down our idols, our pride, and our purposes. May we, by the work of the Holy Spirit, deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy rich bounty gave My body, soul, and all I have In this poor life of labor. Lord, grant that I in ev'ry place May glorify Thy lavish grace And help and serve my neighbor. Let no false doctrine me beguile; And Satan not my soul defile. Give strength and patience unto me To bear my cross and follow Thee. Lord Jesus Christ, My God and Lord, my God and Lord, In death Thy comfort still afford. (LSB 708:2)

Thursday of the Third Week After Pentecost

JULY 3, 2025

**Today's Reading: Catechism: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism - First
Daily Lectionary: Joshua 8:1-28; Acts 11:1-18**

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word. (The Sacrament of Holy Baptism - First)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

If you were to look at the baptismal font without context, what would you see? An eight-sided font, perhaps, with a bowl and some water. It is nothing special and is pretty mundane when you think about it. Yet on that Sunday morning, there at the font, it is as if we were there, right back in the beginning.

Because it's there, in the beginning, where such mundane, chaotically ordered things were made into good, very good, living things and people. In the beginning, you have the waters and the Spirit hovering over the waters. You have the Father ordering and crafting creation, and you have the Son, the Word itself, giving depth and shape by those words.

At that font in the beginning, the Spirit hovers over the face of the waters, and that little one (or even a not-so-little one) approaches. It is there the pastor, the man who stands in Christ Jesus, the Word's stead, proclaims words that have given life since the beginning. "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." The water applied, the Words uttered, and the Father looked upon the one to whom His Word has been proclaimed and His Spirit has entered and says, "Very good."

There at that font, the chaos of sin and death in that little one has died with the Word made flesh who died for all. You and I, that little one, and all who have come to that font young and old shall die and rise daily. Rising to new life by the Spirit, shaped by the living Word who was raised up by the order and glory of His Father.

There at the font, we see not just plain water but the Water included in God's command and combined with God's life-giving Word, just like in the beginning.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O hear and mark the message well, For God Himself has spoken. Let faith, not doubt, among us dwell And so receive this token. Our Lord here with His Word endows Pure water, freely flowing. God's Holy Spirit here avows, Our kinship while bestowing The Baptism of His blessing. (LSB 406:2)

Friday of the Third Week After Pentecost

JULY 4, 2025

Today's Reading: Acts 11:19-30

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 10:1-25; Joshua 10:28-22:34; Acts 11:19-30

"and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians." (Acts 11:26)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Man needs a preacher—someone to proclaim the Law that kills and the Gospel that makes alive. A man sent by God to that place to preach and teach the Word and administer The Sacraments. Antioch was no different, and St. Saul (Paul), although different, was that preacher. Ever since Pentecost, the church had been growing among the Jewish people. Outreach to the Gentiles was not exactly the church's area of expertise. Luckily, they had just the man for the job who had already been on the move preaching the Gospel in the synagogues in Damascus and Tarsus. Remember what God Himself said concerning Saul, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." (Acts 9:15). Set Saul's faults aside; God has made him His preacher to the Gentiles.

In the same way also, God sends you His preacher. He, like Saul, might have some quirks and might not do things the way we always want, but God has sent him to you to give you Jesus. Your pastor, like Saul, will sit with you, bear your cross and suffer with you, laugh and cry with you. In times of greatest doubt and despair, your Pastor is the one God has sent to you to proclaim that your sins are forgiven.

Like Saul, pastors are not perfect. They rely on God's grace just as much as we do, and that grace sustains us even in the hard times. Saul would be no stranger to suffering for the sake of Christ. He had already been snuck out of Damascus in a basket and sent away from the apostles for his reputation. God was with Saul throughout his ministry and service to the church.

Saul and all pastors in Christ sent to serve His people in that time and place are sent to do what the church has always done. Care for you by preaching the Gospel that you are one of God's elect, claimed in the waters of Baptism. God has not forgotten you; His words are written down for you and proclaimed to you by your pastor. Thanks be to God for men like Saul, your Pastor who teaches, preaches, and cares for you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord, help us walk Your servant way Wherever love may lead And, bending low, forgetting self, Each serve the other's need. (LSB 857:1)

Saturday of the Third Week After Pentecost

JULY 5, 2025

Today's Reading: Introit for Pentecost 4 - Psalm 19:2, 4-6; antiphon: Psalm 19:1
Daily Lectionary: Joshua 23:1-16; Acts 12:1-25

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

When Jesus, the bridegroom, comes for His bride, the church, the heavens, and creation itself will not hold back praise. On that day, all will be restored, and creation will dwell with its Creator again forever.

What a vivid scene. Come, Lord Jesus! While the psalmist writes, our minds read, and our hearts declare, "How long?" Indeed, how long will it be until that glorious day when the Bridegroom comes to take His Bride to the wedding feast and celebrate that glorious consummation of the age that will never end?

While waiting is depressing and this life can feel meaningless, we run our course with joy. Christ has come and will come again. Until then, He has given us every promise and blessing, including the assurance that we will stand with Him on that Last Day. How can I be so sure? I am baptized, and you, the baptized, will be with your Jesus, the one whose Name you were baptized into.

Though this course is long, and we grow tired and weak, we are strengthened by the wedding feast of the Lamb, given by the Lamb Himself for us, His bride, to eat and to drink. Jesus gives His Body for the feast and His Blood for you to drink to strengthen and sustain you until He comes to dwell with us fully.

On that day, we will be with Him in glory, with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, hearing the heavens declare the glory of God and the sky proclaim His handiwork.

What a glorious day that will be, as we continue to pray with the psalmist, the saints of old, and saints to come, "Come, Lord Jesus."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

All creation joins to praise You; Earth and sky Your works display. Art and music, gifts You lend us, We return to You today. Alleluia! Alleluia! God, Creator, source of life! (LSB 795:2)

Fourth Sunday After Pentecost

JULY 6, 2025

Today's Reading: Luke 10:1-20

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 24:1-31; Judges 1:1-36; Acts 13:1-12

"...rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20b)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus sent the 72. He called them. He sent them out. There was, after all, work to be done, and lots of it. So Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, called 72 ordinary people and equipped them for service in His Kingdom. They would carry His peace. They would heal the sick, drive out demons, and have the authority to tread on serpents and scorpions. Jesus called them to leave the comfort and security of their homes so that they would carry the love of God into people's lives. Jesus called them to bring light to the darkness. Christ Himself equipped them to deliver the Gifts of salvation.

I never leave my house without three things. They are important. They are necessary. I would go back home to get them if I had forgotten. That is why, as I prepare to leave, I ask myself, "Do I have my wallet, keys, and my phone?" I cannot do most things without them. I need my keys to go anywhere (I live six miles from town) and to get in when I get there. I need my phone to be able to call someone (yes, I am old enough that my iPhone actually gets used to make phone calls), or to look something up. I need my wallet to pay for stuff (but I can do that from my phone now, too), but more importantly than that, my wallet has my ID—my identification. My ID tells me (and others) who I am. I know who I am, and I can go and do what needs to be done.

In the waters of your Baptism, Christ claimed you as His own and marked you as one redeemed. In that life-giving water, God bestows on you Gifts. You have God's Gifts to share His love and shine His light. God will do awesome things through you, not because you are awesome but because He has made you awesome. You might be able to leave home without your wallet, keys, or phone, but you can't leave home without Jesus. He called you by name. "...rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20b)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, You have built Your Church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. Continue to send Your messengers to preserve Your people in true peace that, by the preaching of Your Word, Your Church may be kept free from all harm and danger; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Monday of the Fourth Week After Pentecost

JULY 7, 2025

Today's Reading: Isaiah 66:10-14

Daily Lectionary: Judges 2:6-23; Acts 13:13-41

"As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." (Isaiah 66:13)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

You might be at an age where you do not feel like you need "comfort" from your mom or dad. If you get hurt (it is no longer a boo-boo or an owie), you can simply console yourself. You do not need mommy (or daddy) to kiss it and make it better anymore. That time has gone. You are older and more mature. You simply do not need such things. That is not who you are anymore.

That is what the devil wants you to think. Satan wants you to feel COMPLETELY SELF-SUFFICIENT. He wants you to think that you do not need your parents, or anyone else, or even God to make it through this life. The worldly phrase is "pull yourself up by your bootstraps." In other words, do it yourself. But then, when things go bad, and they inevitably will, it is no one's fault but yours. It is your fault, your guilt, your debt...it is you separating you from your heavenly Father and His peace.

Before you were aware (of anything!), God was there. Before you were born, God knew you. Before you could articulate faith or express your love for God, He loved you. God has always been there for you and will always be. Whether you know it or not, you have a connection to God that will never go away.

Why is that important? Because life is hard. Sin affects us. We cannot handle it all on our own. The world is telling us to try harder, and it seems to be getting worse. The more I do, the more difficult it is. No matter how good you are, you are not good enough.

People in your life will come and go (maybe even your mom or dad). God is always there for you. On the good days, God is there. On the bad days, God is there. On the best day of your life, God is there. On the worst day of your life, God is there...for you. Always. Forever. God comforts you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Father in heaven, you are the author and source of all consolation, the great provider. May we always look to you for comfort and assurance in a world that is neither comforting nor assuring. Fill us with your Spirit that we might be strengthened in our faith and share your love through word and deed. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week After Pentecost

JULY 8, 2025

Today's Reading: Galatians 6:1-10, 14-18

Daily Lectionary: Judges 3:7-31; Acts 13:42-52

"Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

I can't focus. I'm distracted. I can't do what I want to do. I'm just trying to do my homework. I'm just trying to do my chores. No matter how much I try to check off my to-do list, my eyes always wander, and my thoughts are not focused on the tasks at hand. THERE IS SO MUCH TO DO.

These are strong words from Paul for the church in Galatia, and they have not softened in 2000 years. This is a lofty goal and a difficult to-do list: DO NOT GROW WEARY OF DOING GOOD.

You know why? Because that is the first thing that we grow tired of. We poor, miserable sinners want to do good for about 3.2 seconds, and then we become selfish. We want to do anything else. We are lazy. We don't have the energy to do good. We are bored. We can't be bothered with the needs of others. Our need comes first, and then we sin. We can't do it on our own.

That is how Christ did good (the ultimate GOOD) for us. Our needs came first. Jesus did good for us because we could not. We have eternal salvation in Christ because He did not give up on us.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, you can, and will, do good. You will make good choices and God will bring forth fruit from those good choices. We should pray for strength and opportunities to make good choices and put ourselves in situations that help us to do good.

However, you are your own person. Good choices are not always easy. You will get distracted, and you will FAIL. You will FALL SHORT. You will make BAD CHOICES. And you know what...God will continue to LOVE YOU, FORGIVE YOU, and GIVE YOU another chance to do good.

God's love for you is always there. He is always good (even and especially when we aren't). God has so much to do, and He takes care of you. God is focused on you because He loves you. God is GOOD, and He does not give up on us.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, keep our eyes focused on you. You have done the ultimate good for us. Empower us with the strength to share that good with others. May we love as you have loved us. May we forgive as you have forgiven us. May we live lives reflective of your love. Amen.

Wednesday of the Fourth Week After Pentecost

JULY 9, 2025

Today's Reading: Acts 14:1-18

Daily Lectionary: Judges 4:1-24; Judges 5:1-31; Acts 14:1-18

"In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, 'Stand up on your feet!' At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in human form!'" (Acts 14:8-11)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

God is awesome. God does incredible things every day. When you look around you see God working in creation over and over again. This is exactly what happened that day. God works through Paul to heal this man in Lystra. This man had never walked. Paul saw his faith and told him to do that which he never had. His faith made him well, so well, in fact, that he didn't just stand up; he jumped up. This wasn't a better situation, this was the best possible scenario.

However, people are not so smart. (Not just these people, all people, even you and me). People are arrogant and prideful and like to pretend that they understand what is happening, even when they don't. People that day saw god heal that man, but said it was Zeus! People today will see God do amazing things in your life and bless you in incredible ways and (they won't give Zeus credit, probably) they will say things like; it is luck, it is coincidence, it is fate, or (the worst one) that you were able to "manifest" good things by "thinking about them." We poor sinners take credit away from God and His goodness any chance that we get.

Today, this week, and this month, God will bless you. I do not know how, and neither do you. Bad things will probably happen; I do not know what, and neither do you. But just because you do not know does not change that...God will be with you. In His great love for you, God is with you no matter what. God is not the blue genie from Aladdin waiting to grant your wishes, and He certainly is not waiting around for you to "manifest" it yourself. God will provide for you, bless you, love you, and forgive you. The world will not understand. But by faith...you will.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, open our eyes today to see your great work in your world around us. Strengthen our faith that we might see you more clearly. Bless our words and deeds so that others might be strengthened in their faith in You, the only true God. Amen.

Thursday of the Fourth Week After Pentecost

JULY 10, 2025

Today's Reading: Catechism: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism - Second

Daily Lectionary: Judges 6:1-24; Acts 14:19-15:5

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

Second – What benefits does baptism give?

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death of the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Praise God! It works. Baptism works. This is God's grace to us. It is not us doing the work; it is God Himself through the sacrament of holy baptism for you. God forgives you. God rescues you. God saves you eternally. It is all God, not us. That is how it works.

As you grow up, you will probably get a job. When you get a job, you have to do that job; you might have to "go to" that job...In other words, it might not be at your house. A job is work, your work. That is why you get compensated for it, usually with money and benefits. And you have to work for so many hours to get so much money. That is how you work. If you don't work, you don't get paid. That is also how you work. If you cannot be at your job for a day or a week, you have to take sick days or vacation days. You have to earn sick days or vacation days so that you can take time off. That is, again, how YOU work.

However, in Baptism, God does not work as the world works. Baptism is God's Gift to you. In the waters of your Baptism, God chose you. You did not decide for Jesus to come into your heart; God placed his mark on you. The world will try to tell you. That it is about the work of your hands. The stuff your hands do will break. Your work will fall short. In other words...it will not be good enough. The devil himself will torment you with this and make you question the efficacy of God's work by making you focus on your own. Satan will make you think that you do not deserve God's love and that you cannot merit eternal salvation by the work of your hands. And you know what? He's right. So next time, tell the devil what made you right. God did.

Baptism does what you cannot. In baptism, God forgives you, rescues you, and saves you. This is God's grace to us. Baptism works. IT WORKS! Praise God!

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! (LSB 594:3)

Friday of the Fourth Week After Pentecost

JULY 11, 2025

Today's Reading: Acts 15:6-21

Daily Lectionary: Judges 6:25-40; Acts 15:6-21

"We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." (Acts 15:11)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

When I was a child I remember watching television with commercials! (Yes I am old). I seem to remember a number of commercials advertising different toys that all come in "assorted colors and styles." It did not matter what the toys were, there was a variety of them. Similar yet different. Same name, different color. The description matched but it was a different size or shape. But all of them were toys! Toys to be played with, by ME perhaps. The commercials gave a sense of hope and optimism that those toys could be mine.

I was usually knocked back into reality when I did not get that toy. Not every toy could be mine, so I was jealous of my friends who had those cool toys. I wanted to be like them. Occasionally, I had the toy others wanted...and I liked that. No matter the circumstance, there was always some inequality. Something was unfair. It always seemed like life was out of balance.

But not with Jesus. No, Jesus is fair. Jesus loves everybody. Jesus always forgives. Everyone is the same to Jesus. This all sounds great...until...I meet someone who says that they love Jesus, but they are not like me. Don't get me wrong; I know that believers in Jesus come in all shapes and sizes, young and old, from all over the world. I love that about the church. What I am talking about is when someone different comes into church. This person may look or talk differently, may have been born elsewhere, or think about the world and stuff differently than me. Jesus loves all of us, but didn't they know how different they are (and how uncomfortable that actually makes me)?

When Jesus died and rose again, He did that for all people, to atone for the sins of everyone. In the waters of your Baptism, the Holy Spirit gives you faith and empowers you to live a life that you are humanly unable to do. So their faith is like my faith; their works are like my works. We are just in assorted colors and styles. God loves all of us equally because it is all His saving work and His sanctifying grace—no cooler toys. With Jesus, we are all the same. Praise God!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus! We praise you for your grace to us. Strengthen our faith that we might witness boldly to your great love for us. May others see your work in our lives and be emboldened in their love for you. Help us to love others as you have first loved us. Amen.

Saturday of the Fourth Week After Pentecost

JULY 12, 2025

Today's Reading: Introit for Pentecost 5 - Psalm 136:23-26; antiphon: Psalm 136:1
Daily Lectionary: Judges 7:1-23; Judges 7:24-12:15; Galatians 1:1-24

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever." (Psalm 136:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Thanksgiving has become "turkey day" in the United States (or tofurkey day if you are vegetarian or vegan). Thanksgiving in Canada is in October (that's different). Some people eat cranberry "stuff" from a can, and others make fresh cranberries (you will know them because they will tell you incessantly how good their fresh cranberries are). I would say that mashed potatoes are a must, but people differ in their love or hate of lumps in their mashed potatoes (even if they have never mashed a potato in their life). I could go on, but I won't. The only thing that we all agree on is that we are thankful when it is over. Dealing with family can be exhausting. Getting ready to go shopping on Black Friday can be even more exhausting. We gather together under the guise that we are thankful but really want to control the situation to our liking. We are thankful for things being our way. But that is not what God intends.

God intends for us to be thankful all the time, not just seasonally or when it suits us. God is good all the time, not sporadically or when He feels like it. God is good when the sun shines, and the rain falls. God is good when the temperature is above 100 degrees and when it is 20 below. God's love is ours when we are at our best and when we are at our worst. We give thanks to God because He is good, not because good things are happening to us, and certainly not because we are good, because we are not good enough.

So we give thanks to God on the good days and the bad. We give thanks to God then we are hungry and when we are full. We give thanks to God when we have no money and when we have plenty. We give thanks to God from the time we are born to the time we die because He is good. Eat turkey and give thanks. Celebrate Thanksgiving in October and give thanks. Eat whatever kind of cranberries and give thanks. Give thanks at Christmas, Easter, Veteran's Day, and the 4th of July. Give thanks today because God is good.

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 blessed us on our way With countless gifts of love and still is ours today. (LSB 895:1)

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