



REFLECTIONS

Baptism of Our Lord -
Saturday After Ash Wednesday

January 11, 2026 - February 21, 2026



BAPTISM OF OUR LORD- SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

JANUARY 11 - FEBRUARY 21

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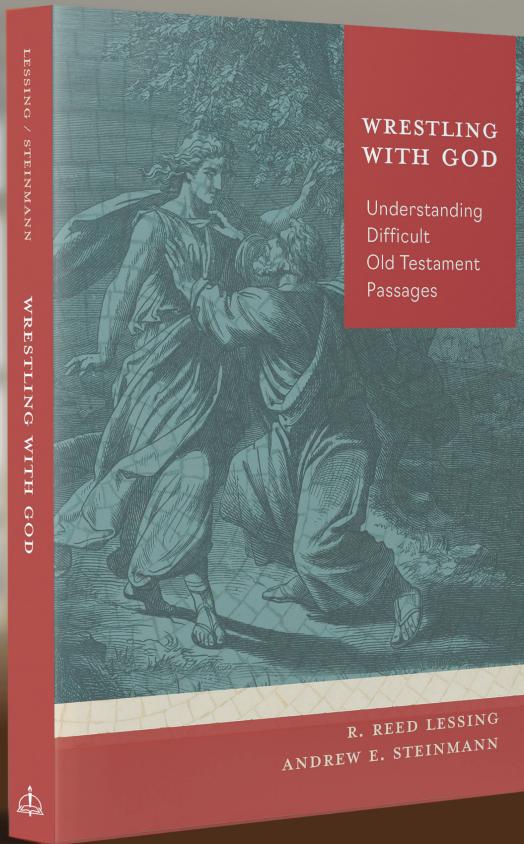
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FIND CLARITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT



*“In *Wrestling with God*, Lessing and Steinmann engage some of the Old Testament’s most challenging questions. They masterfully employ Scripture to interpret Scripture, illuminating difficult passages with theological depth and pastoral insight. With clarity and sober judgment, they sift through biblical evidence and draw faithful and relevant conclusions.”*

— *Paul Elliott,*
professor of theology,
Concordia University Irvine

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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.

Baptism of Our Lord

JANUARY 11, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 33:1-20; Romans 3:1-18

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.'" (Matthew 3:13-15)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

John the Baptist was right, you know. Jesus had no need to be baptized. He is God made Man. He is the God-Man. He is righteousness enfleshed. Shouldn't Jesus baptize the wild prophet from the wilderness instead? John at least understands how much of a sinner he is, and he knows that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the One who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus should be the one who baptizes! Here again, though, you see the overwhelming grace of God at work for you. It seems ludicrous that Jesus insists that John baptize Him "to fulfill all righteousness." But if you look at this from the perspective of Jesus being the only One who can do what you cannot, it makes perfect sense.

Here, Jesus goes even deeper into His State of Humiliation, setting aside His glory and might even more, going down into the muddy waters of the Jordan River to become the sponge that soaks up every sin washed into every font by every Baptism that happens throughout human history.

Jesus fulfills the righteous will of God the Father by absorbing into Himself, and even becoming, every sin ever committed. This is the moment when Jesus picks up your sinfulness, and every single sin you commit, and begins to bear it to His cross on Golgotha.

It's still hard to comprehend. "No, Jesus! I don't want you to have to carry my sin! You are God, why should you stoop so low and do such a distasteful thing?" But this is exactly what Jesus becomes man to do—to take from you what you cannot fix and restore it perfectly. To keep the Law of God perfectly, which you cannot. To love your neighbors more deeply than you ever could. To remake you into His perfect creation, a holy saint worthy of life with Him for all eternity.

All of that happens in the most pedestrian way possible. With plain water and the words "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Righteousness, fulfilled for you.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Father in heaven, at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized in His name faithful in their calling as Your children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for The Baptism of Our Lord).

Monday of the First Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 12, 2026

Today's Reading: Joshua 3:1-3, 7-8, 13-17 or Isaiah 42:1-7

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 34:1-24; Romans 3:19-31

"I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness." (Isaiah 42:6-7)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Too often, we see the Old Testament—and especially the words of the prophets—as bad news. As nothing but proclamations of “Woe!” and “Misery!” and “Punishment!” upon the people. But that’s not all it says. Sure, there are those passages, but sweet words of promise are also scattered throughout the Old Testament, and this is a prime example of the Gospel.

This text is the first of the “Servant Songs” Isaiah proclaims to the people of Israel. The first of the clarifications of the coming Messiah and his mission among God’s people. What he will and will not do in order to restore creation to perfection in the age to come.

We can’t read these words and not see Jesus, though, can we? We’ve spent our whole lives hearing these words (or quotations of them from Sts. Matthew and Luke) and knowing that Jesus was the fulfillment of these promises. But to the Israelites, these were new ideas. These were promises that they didn’t really understand, because they were unsure of their future, and for good reason.

Almighty God proclaims through Isaiah that suffering is coming to his people (there’s the misery part!). They have sinned and continue to sin by flouting God’s commands and worshiping idols. But even this will be forgiven them when they hear the One God sends to them and turn to him in repentance.

God does not want to destroy his people. He wants to restore, heal, and lift them up. He wants to gather them together into the place he’s set aside for them, and that will happen through the work of the One to come, the One who will open eyes and free prisoners. And He will do that with His words and His hands, and ultimately in the giving of His life for all people. The ultimate release from prison is resurrection and life everlasting. Death is the darkest dungeon, and Jesus has destroyed even that.

Isaiah proclaims that this is what is in store for God’s faithful people. Isaiah proclaims to you the same thing. Jesus has come to break God’s people out of bondage and make them a home in his presence for eternity. This is your future, with Him, forever.

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Hail to the Lord’s anointed, Great David’s greater Son! Hail, in the time appointed, His reign on earth begun! He comes to break oppression, To set the captive free, To take away transgression And rule in equity. (LSB 398:1)

Tuesday of the First Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 13, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 36:13-28; Romans 4:1-25

"But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Are you clever and witty? Able to turn a phrase in a way that amazes people with your wisdom? That's a good trait to have, most of the time. But not in your comprehension and explanation of the one true faith. It has become trendy to debate the Christian faith in a way that relies on logic, psychology, and "book smarts." Trying to explain the faith in pithy, witty ways, dropping zingers to undercut your opponent's arguments. But that's not the point, St. Paul says. The Christian faith is nothing other than one emptying oneself of all the "me" language and work, and relying solely on the Word of God and the work of Christ for salvation.

It's not easy for us to admit that we can do nothing to earn our salvation. It's not easy to admit that it is only Almighty God who can (and does!) save us. And that makes it seemingly difficult to talk about the faith with unbelievers; they so often have arguments and statements and bullet points lined up to logically shoot down anything the faithful Christian will say and thus "win" their argument. But that's not the point, St. Paul says. Our Lord and God turns all of that upside down in order to deliver to you saving faith. God becomes man. Glory is hidden. The Savior wanders the countryside. God suffers and dies. These are all things our "cultured" society declares foolish and weak.

But that is exactly how God our Father planned it. He stripped away any chance of you patting yourself on the back and boasting about how great your faith is and how much you have accomplished for God's kingdom, either by your own believing, or by your bringing others to the faith.

Boasting is unbecoming of the Christian because there is nothing to boast in when it comes to our own sinful flesh and blood. It is only the Word of Christ and his death and resurrection for you, applied to you in your Baptism, that saves you. And that may be the most comforting thing of all. Because you can rest in the peace of knowing it was all Gift. Freely given. For you.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

O God, You resist the proud and give grace to the humble. Grant us true humility after the likeness of Your only Son that we may never be arrogant and prideful and thus provoke Your wrath, but in all lowliness be made partakers of the gifts of Your grace; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (Collect for Humility)

Wednesday of the First Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 14, 2026

Today's Reading: Ezekiel 36:33-37:14

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 36:33-37:14; Romans 5:1-21

"Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.' So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army." (Ezekiel 37:9-10)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

One of the most memorable and strangest passages in Holy Scripture is the Valley of Dry Bones. It is a gruesome and fascinating text: dried human bones scattered across a barren valley reassemble into skeletons and then fully formed bodies at a word from the prophet.

But then, after the rattling of bones reassembling, it is quiet once again. A valley now scattered with still, silent bodies. It isn't until Almighty God commands Ezekiel to speak breath into them that they live, breathe, and stand on their own feet. How weird is that? It's really weird until you realize that God speaking breath and life into darkness and death is pretty much how it always works. "Let there be..." and there is. "Lazarus, come out!" and he does.

Ezekiel is given to see a future and a promise for God's people who are lost in exile in a foreign land, and he speaks to them in comfort and proclamation. "This is not the end of your life; God has a plan and a future for his faithful children."

It may seem like you are at wits' end, lost in a maze, or a wilderness, or a dark place with seemingly no way out and no future, but God has other things in mind for you. He has a promise and a future: life everlasting, and he gives it to you through the power of the breath, His Holy Spirit.

Jesus breathes that Spirit on His disciples on Easter evening. That Spirit breathes on the assembled hearers at Pentecost, and that Spirit breathes new life and faith into you at your Baptism. The life, forgiveness, and salvation won for you in Christ Jesus's death and resurrection are given to you while you are still lost and dead in sin, given completely by God's grace and favor for you.

When you feel like you have no way out, or that you are completely lost, hear the Word of the Lord and let His breath refresh you and revive you.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

O Holy Spirit, enter in, And in our hearts Your work begin, Your dwelling place now make us. Sun of the soul, O Light divine, Around and in us brightly shine, To joy and gladness wake us That we may be Truly living, To You giving Prayer unceasing And in love be still increasing. (LSB 913:1)

Thursday of the First Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 15, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: First Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 37:15-28; Romans 6:1-23

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

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

One of my favorite exercises in Confirmation is having the confirmands noodle on the question of how many Commandments you can break at one time with one sin. It is always interesting to see how they think through the process because we so often think we can reduce that number to one, but we have to sin on a Sunday to break the Third Commandment! The point of the exercise is to make it clear that the Commandments are so intertwined that it doesn't matter how many Commandments you break; breaking any single one of them is a damnable offense. And the reason you break Commandments Two through Ten is because you've already thrown the First into the trash.

Why do you despise God's Word and His preaching? Because you decided you didn't want to hear from God that day. Why did you want to throat punch someone? Because you know better than God that he really deserves it! Why did you ignore Mom's request to take out the trash? Because you know better how your time should be spent, not her. All of these sins have one thing in common: you are the one who knows best, not God your Father. You decided that you know better than God how to live your life. You have made yourself God, then. It may not seem like it, but that is the truth of the matter. Any time you decide that you know better than Almighty God how to live your life, you have replaced Him as God.

The blessing in all of this is that once you realize how you try to game the system, you can dial back the idolatry of self (which is what this behavior actually is) and see how you can react positively to God's Word and commands. You can take comfort in the forgiveness given you in Christ, and resting in that peace, you can fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

No, you never will be able to keep the Commandments properly. But by striving in faith to love and trust in God as He desires to be loved, by following the examples of faithful Christians around you, and by gladly receiving the Gifts God freely gives, you begin to learn how you can live faithfully: with a repentant heart and trusting that His forgiveness is yours, because He loves you more than you will ever know.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

I know my faith is founded On Jesus Christ, my God and Lord; And this my faith confessing, Unmoved I stand on His sure Word. Our reason cannot fathom The truth of God profound; Who trusts in human wisdom Relies on shifting ground. God's Word is all sufficient, It makes divinely sure; And trusting in its wisdom, My faith shall rest secure. (LSB 587:1)

Friday of the First Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 16, 2026

Today's Reading: Romans 7:1-20

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 38:1-23; Romans 7:1-20

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me." (Romans 7:18-20)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

I know that one candy bar is enough, but I'm going to eat three anyway. I know I shouldn't flame the Social Media Influencer of the Moment on TikTok, but I'm going to do it anyway. I know I shouldn't text my friend three pews behind me during church, but I'm going to do it anyway. The examples are endless.

And the endless examples put the lie to the idea that one can keep God's Law as He wishes it to be kept—perfectly. It simply can't be done, no matter how hard you try, because even your understanding of "good works" is broken because of the sin that ravages you, and the constant lies of Satan in your ears.

This is what St. Paul is trying to beat into our thick Lutheran skulls. That no amount of trying to do good is going to benefit you. And it certainly isn't going to save you! Even when you want to do the right thing, to do what is pleasing to God, it is so difficult because of the sin that permeates you and the evil that is close by all around you.

And you can only see the truth of this when you use the eyes of faith. Eyes of faith, given to you in your Baptism when you were crucified, died, buried, and resurrected with Christ. Eyes of faith, strengthened in the read and proclaimed Gospel. Eyes of faith, strengthened and sustained in the receiving of Christ's true Body and Blood in the Sacrament, given for your forgiveness.

Only by stepping back from your own flailing attempts to do "good," and instead receiving what your Lord Christ gives freely as Gift can you see the truth. That the only good you do is done by Christ in you. He equips you to love your neighbor. He equips you to be an example to those around you. He does all things to His glory and for your salvation.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Let us ever walk with Jesus, Follow His example pure, Through a world that would deceive us And to sin our spirits lure. Onward in His footsteps treading, Pilgrims here, our home above, Full of faith and hope and love, Let us do the Father's bidding. Faithful Lord, with me abide; I shall follow where You guide. (LSB 685:1)

Saturday of the First Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 17, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Epiphany 2 - Psalm 66:1-5, 20; antiphon: Psalm 66:4; 92:1

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 39:1-10, 17-29; Romans 7:21-8:17

"Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.'" (From the Introit for Epiphany 2)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

St. Paul points out to the church in Philippi that the risen Christ has been given the name above all names, that at Jesus's name, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and God. That statement looks forward to the Last Day, when it will be clear to everyone, when the veil of sin is lifted, and every eye sees clearly. But our Introit says essentially the same thing, calling on all of creation—all the earth—to acknowledge the Lord God, and this was written hundreds of years before Christ walked the earth and showed his power over sin, death, and the Devil.

The point is the consistency of the Biblical writers; they are moved and carried by the Holy Spirit to point to the very truth that undergirds all of life and creation: our Lord and God is worthy of all praise and adoration. He alone is to be the sole focus of all worship on earth.

And so tomorrow, when you hear that Jesus turns gallons and gallons of water into fine wine, and that a part of creation is remade from a thing of the Law to a Gospel blessing, you, too, may shout for joy that the One who spoke creation into existence has made his light shine into the darkness of sin to reclaim you for himself as His child, His restored creation.

This should also be the response of the Christian in weekly worship as well. The baptized should see in the Divine Service an opportunity to shout for joy to God, to sing glory to His name, to give thanks for the salvation won by Christ for you, which you receive the assurance of in Confession and Absolution, which you taste on your tongue in the Lord's Supper, which you trace upon yourself with the sign of the cross. All of it, part of creation singing to you and with you of God's glorious Gifts and salvation, all for you.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Lord God, bless Your Word wherever it is proclaimed. Make it a word of power and peace to convert those not yet Your own and to confirm those who have come to saving faith. May Your Word pass from the ear to the heart, from the heart to the lip, and from the lip to the life that, as You have promised, Your Word may achieve the purpose for which You send it; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (Collect for Blessing on the Word)

The Confession of St. Peter

JANUARY 18, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 8:27-35 (36-9:1)

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 40:1-4; 43:1-12; Ezekiel 40:5-42:20; 43:13-27; Romans 8:18-39

"And he asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Christ.' And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him." (Mark 8:29-30)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus must have missed the evangelism workshop. As Christians, we're supposed to tell everyone about Jesus, right? But when Peter very plainly—and correctly—identifies Jesus as the Christ, "he strictly charged them to tell no one about him." Very curious indeed.

Does Jesus, like Superman, want to keep His true identity a secret? Does He only want a select few to know the truth concerning Him? Does He only want some people to be saved?

Peter boldly confesses that Jesus is the Christ, but what he says next shows why Jesus doesn't want them going around telling everyone about it. After St. Peter's confession, Jesus begins to speak of His death and resurrection. The name "Christ" means the "anointed," and Jesus was anointed to die and then rise on the third day. But Peter, on the heels of his bold confession, rebuked Jesus for such talk.

It's necessary to proclaim Jesus as the Christ, but it's not enough. "We preach Christ crucified," St. Paul writes to the Romans. To separate the Christ from His cross makes Him no Christ at all.

If you confess with St. Peter that Jesus is the Christ, you also confess that He is the Christ of the cross. "If anyone would come after me," Jesus says to those who confess Him, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

The Christ of the cross is also the Christ of the empty tomb. The confession of St. Peter—and your confession—is also a confession that death is not the end of your life, but that, following the Christ, death gives way to new life.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, You revealed to the apostle Peter the blessed truth that Your Son Jesus is the Christ. Strengthen us by the proclamation of this truth that we too may joyfully confess that there is salvation in no one else; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Monday of the Second Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 19, 2026

Today's Reading: John 2:1-11

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 44:1-16, 23-29; Romans 9:1-18

"On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee" (John 2:1a)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

"On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee..." Starting John's Gospel at 2:1 needs a little more context. Third day of what? We need to go back a chapter.

Three days before the wedding, Jesus called Philip and Nathanael. "The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.'" (John 1:43). Wait, the next day after what? Back again.

Jesus calls more disciples (Andrew and Simon Peter), and John (the baptizing one) makes a declaration. "The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'" (John 1:35-36). Oh, another next day. Gotta read back further. "The next day he (John—the baptizing one) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Another next day!

"And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?'" (John 1:19). If you go back any further than this, you don't get a day, you just get the beginning. "In the beginning was the Word..." (John 1:1).

John begins his Gospel with a week. The first week in the Bible was a week of creation (Genesis 1:2-2:3). But that first week was ruined by the advent of sin in the world. Now the New Testament begins a new week of new creation, starting with the Baptism of the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

The first week of the Bible ended with a wedding. God brought Eve to Adam and instituted holy matrimony. The New Testament also ends its first week with a wedding at Cana. The bride and groom of that wedding aren't important; it's the presence of Jesus that's important. His first sign, the water into wine, creates faith in His disciples.

But the last day of this week is also introduced with an unmistakably Easter phrase: "on the third day..." You just want to finish with, "He rose again from the dead." But that's really the point. The resurrection of Jesus on the third day is a recapitulation of all creation and the beginning of the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Gather us together, we pray, from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. Amen. (Prayer of Thanksgiving, LSB p. 161)

Tuesday of the Second Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 20, 2026

Today's Reading: Exodus 33:12-23 or Amos 9:11-15

Daily Lectionary: Ezekiel 47:1-14, 21-23; Romans 9:19-33

"Moses said, 'Please show me your glory.'" (Exodus 33:18)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Moses has a request for the Lord. "Please show me your glory." It is an odd request, considering that Moses had already seen the Lord's glory. In the burning bush, Moses saw the Lord's glory. In the Exodus, the Lord's glory went before them and behind them in fire and cloud. It enveloped the mountain. It descended on the tent of meeting when Moses spoke to the Lord as a friend. What more is there to see?

The Lord's face. When Moses saw the burning bush, he had to hide his face for fear (Exodus 3:6). Now he grows bolder. "Please show me your glory." "Please show me your face." The Lord responds, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But, you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (Exodus 33:19-20). God's holy face is a death sentence for sinful man. Even the great prophet Moses could not endure the judgment of that revelation. If the Lord were to emerge from the fire or the cloud, it would not be a gracious face shining upon you but a stern countenance darkened by anger.

Yet, the Lord will be gracious. He will show mercy. But not by stepping out of the fire or the cloud to show His face. Not at this moment. But as a promise of things to come, the Lord offers a glimpse. He hides Moses in the cleft of the rock and shows him His back. Even this compromise changes Moses, though. His own face begins to shine with the reflected radiance of God's glory, with a brilliance such that he has to wear a veil.

At the end of Moses' story, the book of Deuteronomy says, "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deuteronomy 34:10). This is an ironic summary of Moses' ministry, considering how the Lord explicitly denied him the sight of His face. But it's not the end of the Moses story. Moses again makes an appearance. "And [Jesus] was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him" (Matthew 17:2-3).

The face of Jesus masks the darkened countenance of God and presents the gracious face of God. This gracious face of God also shines upon you in the ministry of the Church. Having put on a face of flesh and blood, the Lord says to you, "Look on my face and live."

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. (Benediction, LSB p. 166)

Wednesday of the Second Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 21, 2026

Today's Reading: Ephesians 5:22-33 or Romans 12:6-16

Daily Lectionary: Joel 1:1-20; Romans 10:1-21

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good." (Romans 12:9)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Love does not exist apart from those who love and those things they love. Love is intentional; that is, it is always aimed at something. Love finds delight in that which is beloved and is drawn to it. Love is not simply an emotion; love motivates action.

It's possible to do things that look loving, but with the wrong intentions. So St. Paul exhorts us, "Let love be genuine." More literally, St. Paul writes that love should not be hypocritical. Typically, people think of hypocrites as people who believe the right things but do the wrong things. Think of the regular charges of hypocrisy that the secular world makes against Christians: "You believe in Jesus, but you don't help the poor!" Hypocrite!

A *hypokritos* in Greek culture was a play-actor who covered his face to play his part. This means that a hypocrite is someone who makes a public display of something he is not. Someone who acts the part, but is something different under the mask. It's the opposite of what the secular world calls hypocrisy.

The world is filled with hypocritical love. People do loving acts to hide their true selves. They do things that appear loving, but their intentions are misdirected. So St. Paul clarifies his exhortation: "Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good." A hypocritical love behaves well but holds fast to evil and abhors what is good. Genuine love is oriented to that which is good. St. Paul then lists some indicators of genuine love: brotherly affection, showing honor, fervor of spirit, service to the Lord, joy in hope, patience in tribulation, constant prayer, and, yes, contributing to the needs of the saints and hospitality (Romans 12:10-13).

St. Paul's exhortation to genuine love, then, is not that you should do these things, but that you should be the kind of person who does these things. How can you be this kind of person? "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned" (Romans 12:3). Genuine love begins with the grace of God and a generous measure of faith. Genuine love does not mask cruel intentions, but under the mask of good works is the pure love of God alone.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

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

Thursday of the Second Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 22, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Second Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Joel 2:1-17; Romans 11:1-24

"To confuse the devil, I say, we should always have this holy name in our mouth, so that the devil may not be able to injure us as he wishes." (Large Catechism I 72)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Have you ever considered that the first person in the Bible to invoke the name of God was the devil? "Did God really say...?" (Genesis 3:1). It's not God's peculiar name, the name He reveals to Moses from the burning bush, but the devil has God's name in his mouth nonetheless.

But He uses God's name not for prayer or praise or thanksgiving to the one who created him and the creation around him. He uses it to confuse the issue, to cause injury. Out of envy, he twists God's Word ever so much and thereby profanes His name. Questioning God in such a way makes Him a liar and drags His name through the mud.

The proper response to the devil's misuse of God's name would be a proper use of God's name. How is God's name properly used? "We should...call upon it in every trouble..." (Small Catechism, Explanation to the Second Commandment). Eve and Adam were certainly in trouble at that moment. Rather than engage the devil in a debate built on a false invocation of God's name, they should have immediately turned to prayer.

Furthermore, God's name is used properly when it is used to apply right teaching (Large Catechism I 64). When the devil says, "Did God really say...?" the proper response according to the Second Commandment is, "Thus says the Lord."

When you have the words of Holy Scripture in your mouth (for there is where you find what the Lord says), you have the holy name of God in your mouth. This confuses the devil because he is used to people simply taking him at his word. But his word does not support the truth. His word is not oriented towards the good. His word is not a living, active, creative word. His words are empty.

The devil wants to injure us with his word, and we still bear the wounds of his first injury in the sin that has been passed down to us. But God's Word heals, and whoever calls upon His name will be saved.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds In a believer's ear! It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds, And drives away our fear. (LSB 524:1)

Friday of the Second Week After the Epiphany

JANUARY 23, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for The Transfiguration of Our Lord - Psalm 84:1-2a, 4, 10-11; antiphon: Psalm 77:18b

Daily Lectionary: Joel 2:18-32; Romans 11:25-12:13

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!" (Psalm 84:1)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

When Peter saw the Lord Jesus transfigured on the mountain with Moses and Elijah standing beside him, he offered to build three tents (Mark 9:5). Perhaps this was a purely practical response, to provide some shelter for an extended visit. Perhaps, though, perceiving the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus and the appearance of the Law and the Prophets, Peter was transported back to the earliest days of the people of Israel, when the glory of the Lord dwelt in a tent, or the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle was a lovely dwelling. God Himself had designed it and had chosen the artisans to build it. It was made with the finest materials and craftsmanship to reflect Him whom it housed. Further, its design was oriented around its purpose, not only as a dwelling place for God, but also as the place where God dwelt for the forgiveness of His people. The Tabernacle was the place of sacrifice.

King David (who did not appear at the Transfiguration) was not happy that God dwelt in a tent when he dwelt in a lovely house of cedar (2 Samuel 7:2). David wanted to build a permanent house for God, but God objected—He preferred to dwell in His tent. But God relented, and David's son built the house David longed for. The Temple was a lovely dwelling place, perhaps even exceeding the luxury of the Tabernacle. But it, too, was lovely because it was a place of sacrifice and forgiveness.

In the course of history, this lovely Temple was destroyed, rebuilt, expanded, and destroyed again. One problem with a Temple built with hands is that it does not go with the people, as the Tabernacle had. A further problem is that the Lord of heaven and earth does not live in temples made by man (Acts 17:24). Neither the Temple nor the Tabernacle before it could contain the glory of God, nor could the tents Peter offered to build.

Instead, God has pitched His tent, so to speak, in human flesh. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," writes St. John (John 1:14). There, in the flesh of Jesus, all the fullness of the Deity dwells bodily (Colossians 2:9). It is a lovely dwelling place, not for gold or cedar or beautiful garments, but because Jesus is the place where God is present for the forgiveness of sins. The flesh of Jesus is the new Temple, the new Tabernacle, the dwelling place of the Lord of hosts. And how lovely it is!

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

To Your temple, Lord, I come, For it is my worship home. This earth has no better place, Here I see my Savior's face. (LSB 981:1)

St. Timothy, Pastor and Confessor

JANUARY 24, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 24:42-47

Daily Lectionary: Joel 3:1-21; Romans 12:14-13:14

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?" (Matthew 24:45)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

In the space of just a couple of verses, Jesus plays the part both of a midnight thief and a delayed master. This fits with the broader context of Matthew 24, where Jesus preaches concerning the end times. He jumps from the things that will happen in the next few years to the things that will happen upon His return on the Last Day. He switches His similes just as abruptly: Noah's flood (Matthew 24:37-39); men in the field and women at the mill being taken away (Matthew 24:40-42); a thief who breaks in at an unannounced hour (Matthew 24:43-44); a master who returns after a long trip (Matthew 24:45-51).

No shortage of false teachings have come from people trying to parse these sayings of Jesus and assign specific and definite meanings to the figures in His speech. But it's an impossible task. No one knows exactly what Jesus means here. But the point isn't to figure Jesus out. "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Matthew 24:36). Whether it's a delayed master, a sneaky thief, a disappearing mate, or Noah's flood, the point is that you should never be unprepared for Jesus to return. "Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:44).

How do you prepare for Jesus to return? The last simile points you in the direction to look. "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?"

Since His departure, the Lord has ordered His household to prepare for His return. This includes appointing faithful servants to oversee the household and ensure everyone gets fed. In other words, Jesus has established the ministry of the Church.

On this day of remembrance for St. Timothy, we remember not just the man but his service. St. Timothy, along with St. Paul and all the ministers of the Church who have faithfully proclaimed the Holy Gospel and administered the Holy Supper, are the faithful servants of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:1) who have kept the food on the table, so to speak. Thanks be to God for his faithful servants and for His food.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, You have always given to Your Church on earth faithful shepherds such as Timothy to guide and feed Your flock. Make all pastors diligent to preach Your holy Word and administer Your means of grace, and grant Your people wisdom to follow in the way that leads to life eternal; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

The Conversion of St. Paul

JANUARY 25, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 19:27-30

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 1:1-21; Romans 14:1-23

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (Matthew 19:30)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Has anyone ever made such a complete 180-degree turn in life as St. Paul? Writing to Pastor Timothy, St. Paul confesses, "formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent" of the Christian faith (1 Timothy 1:13). He lists "persecutor of the church" as one of his bonafide to prove his zeal in the flesh (Philippians 3:6). He presided over the murder of the first martyr, St. Stephen (Acts 7:58).

It took a miraculous appearance from the risen Lord Jesus Christ in His glory to convert Saul, to pick him up from the Damascus road, and turn him from the way of death to the way of life. Blinded by the light, Saul fasted and prayed until God sent him a minister to baptize him, absolve him, and feed him. No one converts themselves, after all.

St. Saul didn't opt for a quiet life of faith. Following his conversion, the book of Acts says, "Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 9:22).

St. Saul (later known as St. Paul) was the first to preach Jesus in many places during his several missionary journeys. But he also bears another peculiar distinction that explains his new zeal for preaching—he was the last eyewitness of the resurrection. After rattling off some other witnesses, he tells the Church at Corinth, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me" (1 Corinthians 15:8).

That's the way things run in the kingdom of God. "Many who are first will be last, and the last first." Although St. Matthew wrote these words of Jesus, St. Paul personified them. "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:9-10a).

Your conversion may not have been as noteworthy as St. Paul's; in fact, it may have just been a splash of water on your forehead with a few dozen people looking on. But God's grace is never in vain, and by His grace you are what you are: a child of God and a fellow saint with St. Paul.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, You turned the heart of him who persecuted the Church and by his preaching caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world. Grant us ever to rejoice in the saving light of Your Gospel and, following the example of the apostle Paul, to spread it to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

St. Titus, Pastor and Confessor

JANUARY 26, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 10:1-9

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 2:1-3:10; Romans 15:1-13

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

The Church needs workers. The Lord has ordered His kingdom in such a way that people bring His Word of peace to other people. This is one particular work, but there is a lot of work that goes into supporting this work, too. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two ambassadors to speak peace, He also appointed the sons of peace who received them to support their work by providing housing, food, and drink so that the ambassadors of peace could continue their proclamation.

The Church needs workers. Titus was one of those church workers, a laborer in the Lord's harvest. We recognize Titus as a pastor and a confessor. St. Paul called him "my partner and fellow worker for your benefit" (2 Corinthians 8:23). St. Paul also describes his work in more detail in his letter to Titus: "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you" (Titus 1:5). The Church also needs administrators.

The Church needs workers. What work are you able to do? Can you preach? Can you teach? Can you comfort? Can you serve? Can you make music? The Church has many needs and a variety of professional offices, each with its own qualifications and requirements (your own pastor is an excellent resource for discovering these opportunities to work in the Church).

The Church needs workers. But the Church also needs sons and daughters of peace to receive these workers. The Church needs workers, and those workers need the Church to support them. Make sure your pastor and other professional Church workers get paid a decent salary, "for the laborer deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7b).

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few," says Jesus. "Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." The Church needs workers, and both the Church and the workers need your prayers.

Whether you work or receive, support or pray, know that the Lord Jesus is the Lord of the harvest. He is the one who sends workers to the Church, so that the kingdom of God may come near you.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, You called Titus to the work of pastor and teacher. Make all shepherds of Your flock diligent in preaching Your holy Word so that the whole world may know the immeasurable riches of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Tuesday after the Transfiguration of Our Lord

JANUARY 27, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 17:1-9

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 4:1-5:11; Romans 15:14-33

"And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light." (Matthew 17:2)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Had you encountered Jesus during His time of humiliation, that is, from His incarnation and birth through His final breath on the cross and His burial, there would be nothing remarkable to behold. Isaiah prophesied this when he wrote, "he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). Jesus looked like any other human being.

What gained Him notoriety were the things He did and the things He said. Healings and other marvels, like feeding thousands on a couple of occasions, drew attention. His words cut two ways: some clung to them for dear life; others grew ever more resentful until they were driven to murder to shut His mouth. But He looked like any other person when He did the things He did and said the things He said. Even when He walked on water, He looked like an ordinary person doing an extraordinary thing.

The exception was His Transfiguration. On that mountain, He took on a new form. Not that He abandoned the flesh and blood He had assumed at His incarnation—rather, He set aside for a moment the form of a servant He had taken at His incarnation (Philippians 2:7). The figure He revealed on the mountain was the figure of a man and also at the same time more than man. Jesus revealed the divine glory and majesty that He had humbly hidden, but was always there.

The Transfiguration demonstrates the full and complete unity of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ. This union is so full and complete that the Son of God communicates the divine majesty to human flesh and blood. The regular, ordinary, normally unremarkable human being who said and did some noteworthy things shines with the glory of God. In this union, God elevates the human creature to a heavenly life.

The glimpse of divine glory Jesus reveals on the mountain is also a preview of the glory that awaits those who are in Christ. By faith in His Word and participation in His body in the Sacrament, we become members of His body, which shines with divine glory. For a time in this world, the glory remains hidden under suffering and the cross. But "this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17) when Jesus returns.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

With shining face and bright array Christ deigns to manifest today What glory shall be theirs above Who joy in God with perfect love. (LSB 413:3)

Wednesday after the Transfiguration of Our Lord

JANUARY 28, 2026

Today's Reading: Exodus 34:29-35 or Exodus 3:1-14

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 6:1-7:14; Romans 16:17-27

"Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God." (Exodus 34:29)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

In the Transfiguration of our Lord, we see the communication, or the delivery, of the divine majesty to the human nature of Jesus. This means that things that are normally only true of God are also true of the human being Jesus Christ. Normally, human flesh and blood does not shine with uncreated light as bright as the sun. But the human flesh of Jesus shines with the light of divine glory. This is not because of any quality of the human nature, but because in the union of God and man in the person of Jesus, the divine nature lends its light to the human.

But that's Jesus. The God-man. The one and only Son of God who assumed human nature in the unity of person. The one in whom the whole fullness of Deity dwells bodily (Colossians 2:9). No other human being who has ever walked this earth has been personally united with one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. But the fact that the Son of God has communicated His divine glory to the human flesh and blood He assumed in His person opens the possibility for other flesh-and-blood humans to receive the Gifts of divine majesty.

And Moses shows that it does, in fact, happen. After conversing with God and writing the commands of God on a replacement set of stone tables, he comes back down the mountain. "Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God." Normally, human flesh does not shine with light. But Moses' skin shone. While Scripture does not say that its brilliance was like the sun (as was the Transfiguration of Jesus), they still had to put a veil over his face (Exodus 34:33).

If Jesus' face shone like the sun with its own divine light, then the face of Moses shone like the moon, reflecting the glory of God. And do not miss the cause: "because he had been talking with God." Moses' face shines with borrowed light communicated to him by the Word of God.

You, too, shine with a certain borrowed light when you hear the Word of God and keep it. St. Paul urges you to be "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life" (Philippians 2:15b-16a). This light is God's by nature, but yours by grace. Follow Jesus and you will not walk in darkness, but you will have the light of life (John 8:12).

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Renew me, O eternal Light, And let my heart and soul be bright, Illumined with the light of grace That issues from Your holy face. (LSB 704:1)

Thursday after the Transfiguration of Our Lord

JANUARY 29, 2026

Today's Reading: 2 Peter 1:16-21

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 8:1-23; 2 Timothy 1:1-18

"And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place." (2 Peter 1:19a)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

The Transfiguration of our Lord was certainly a spectacle. Literally, it was something that Peter, James, and John saw with their own eyes. Peter confirms this: "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). And not only did they see with their own eyes, they also heard with their own ears: "For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:17-18).

But only three people saw the spectacle of the divine majesty on the holy mountain and heard the voice borne from heaven. If God really wants the world to believe in Him and be saved, wouldn't it make sense to show that majesty to everyone, to speak from heaven so that the whole world could hear? Why not let everyone see with their own eyes and hear with their own ears?

The irony is that, should God reveal His majestic glory and speak from heaven, it would not be for our good. Remember that Peter, James, and John fell down like dead men and were clueless at the time as to what the revelation meant. Further, God does not want to be known as blinding glory and a disembodied voice. He wants to be known in the flesh because He does not save the world by showing His glory; He saves the world by suffering death on a cross.

So, "we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-20). The light of Scripture isn't the blinding majestic glory, but the Christ, crucified and risen as the morning star before the dawn of a new creation.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

God's Word is our great heritage And shall be ours forever; To spread its light from age to age Shall be our chief endeavor. Through life it guides our way, In death it is our stay. Lord, grant, while worlds endure, We keep its teachings pure Throughout all generations. (LSB 581:1)

Friday after the Transfiguration of Our Lord

JANUARY 30, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Third Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 9:1-17; 2 Timothy 2:1-26

"But what is meant by keeping it holy?" "Nothing else than to be occupied with holy words, works, and life." (Large Catechism I 87)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

The first holy day was the seventh day of creation. "So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation" (Genesis 2:3). It was a holy day not because it was more special than the days that had preceded it. In fact, each of the first six days could be considered more special because of God's wonderful creations on each day. The seventh day was distinct not because of the work God accomplished, but because of the Word He spoke. His blessing blessed His day of rest.

Whether it's a day of rest or a day of work, a day is holy because it "is a day the Lord has made" (Psalm 118:24) and a day in which God speaks and blesses. The government or other earthly institutions may declare some days to be holidays, but a true holiday (holy day) is the one that is made holy by God's Word, whether the world recognizes it or not. God makes a day a holy day, but we are commanded to keep it holy. The Large Catechism gives three ways that we keep the day holy.

First, we should be occupied with holy words. This begins with God's Word. A day of rest isn't purely to pursue leisure, but to clear room to attend the Divine Service, where God speaks publicly through the ministry of the church. And having received God's holy Word, we then speak holy words. First in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving to God for His great works. For when we rest, God goes to work in us to make us holy by His Word. And having been sanctified, we commit to sanctified speech with one another.

Second, we should be occupied with holy works. Holy works are not distinct from other works because of their quality, but because they are works performed by holy people. God sanctifies us by His Word, which also extends to our works. Yes, we still sin on account of the weakness of our flesh, but God continues to sanctify us and the things that we do by His mercy, forgiveness, and the gifts of His grace.

Finally, we should be occupied with a holy life. Holy words and works should not be sequestered to the time of worship—the holiness of God, which He imparts to us, should pervade our lives. We should be occupied by holy words and works every day. Thus, every day becomes a Sabbath Day made holy by God's Word and blessing.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

"You shall observe the worship day That peace may fill your home, and pray, And put aside the work you do, So that God may work in you."Have mercy, Lord! (LSB 581:4)

Saturday after the Transfiguration of Our Lord

JANUARY 31, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Septuagesima - Psalm 18:1-2a, 27, 32, 49; antiphon: Psalm 18:5-6a

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 10:1-11:3; 2 Timothy 3:1-17

"I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer." (Psalm 18:1-2a)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

David had once soothed Saul's troubled soul with his music (1 Samuel 16:23). Soon, though, Saul became suspicious of David and jealous of his successes. Jealousy soon turned to hatred, and Saul attempted to kill David on multiple occasions. But the Lord was with David and delivered him from Saul as he had delivered him from the lion, the bear, and the giant Goliath.

His response is a love Psalm. "I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer." These words begin a litany of praise for God's mighty works. The Psalm concludes, "For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing to your name. Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever" (Psalm 18:49-50).

It's such an important Psalm that Scripture records it twice: first, in the 18th entry of the book of Psalms, and second in 2 Samuel 22. Why the repetition? This Psalm, as with every other Psalm, is only secondarily a Psalm of David (or of any other author). The Psalms are primarily the songs of Jesus. He is the author by His Holy Spirit, and He has only lent these words to His forefathers in the flesh until the time that He takes them upon His lips.

Psalm 18 is important because it also speaks of the mightiest act of God: "the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears" (Psalm 18:5b-6). Psalm 18 sings of the resurrection. Where David only came near death, Jesus was ensnared by it. But as Jesus prayed Psalm 18, His Father, the Lord God Almighty, heard His voice, and He delivered Him from the grave on the third day.

There is no greater love than someone laying down His life for His friends. The Lord has laid down His life for you. He is the Rock who emerged from the tomb cut in the rock. He is the mighty fortress that stands strong against all foes. He is the deliverer from death and the grave.

I love You, O Lord.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Thee will I love, my strength, my tower; Thee will I love, my hope, my joy. Thee will I love with all my power, With ardor time shall ne'er destroy. Thee will I love, O Light divine, So long as life is mine. (LSB 694:1)

Septuagesima

FEBRUARY 1, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 20:1-16

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 11:4-17; 2 Timothy 4:1-18

"So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (Matthew 20:16)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

There are situations and things in life that force us to confront issues of fairness. Group projects are a common, though often unwelcome, example of this. It seems like there is always one person who does not do his or her fair share of the work and somehow gets the same grades as all of those who do put in the work. In a fair, just world, this would not happen. Each of us would be justly, fairly given what we earned. The hard workers would get better grades than the lazy ones who do not contribute much. In everyday life, this certainly seems like a fair way to do things.

But this is exactly the opposite of what Jesus teaches us about the Kingdom of God. If we paid for our labor for God, what would we deserve? If we are being honest, we wouldn't want what we deserve. After all, even our best works are still mixed in with our sinful condition. And while it is most certainly a great joy to do things that God wants us to do, we do not do them to get a greater reward from Him. Those who come into the Kingdom of God as little infants receive the same reward as those who come to faith in their last moments of life. And both receive the same wage: forgiveness of sins, salvation, and everlasting life through Jesus Christ the Savior.

This is unfair, but thanks be to God that it is! If we were given the just wage for our works, we would be given nothing except death and torment in Hell. But in Christ, we are not given what we deserve; we are given what He deserves. And, by faith, it is given to us. So we all, each of us, are given this great treasure of salvation, no matter how long or short our time as Christians is on this earth. And all of this, Jesus says, is not due to something in us or due to our efforts in the vineyard but is due solely because of our Father in heaven's generosity. God wants you to have this great treasure and, because of Jesus, it is made available to all of us by His Word.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, graciously hear the prayers of Your people that we who justly suffer the consequence of our sin may be mercifully delivered by Your goodness to the glory of Your name; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord

FEBRUARY 2, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 2:22-32 (33-40)

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 12:1-13:9; Titus 1:1-2:6

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word" (Luke 2:29)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus' earthly parents were devout, church-going people. Because they cared about God and His commands, they brought Jesus to the Temple to offer the sacrifice commanded in Leviticus 12:1-8. It seems that Joseph and Mary were not well off; Leviticus 12:8 says that two turtle-doves or pigeons could be offered by those who cannot afford to offer a lamb. But this historical fact is not merely due to financial circumstances. Jesus does not need a lamb given for Him because He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

That is to say, Jesus Himself will be the great and final sacrifice to take away sin, undo the rule of the Devil, and overthrow death. None of this is by accident. God first promised this shortly after Adam and Eve sinned and were given the pronouncement of the curse. A Son of woman will come to crush the serpent, God said in Genesis 3:15. And this Son would do so by being struck by the powers of evil and their king, Satan. But they would not overcome Him.

And this was not a secret. Even though it seems like many people at the time missed this, the main purpose of Jesus' ministry on earth, there were still those who heard this often-repeated promise in the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament: God will send a Man to save His people from sin and death.

This is why Simeon, when he recognized Jesus by the Holy Spirit, sang out that He is now able to depart in peace. The salvation, the long-hoped-for restoration and redemption of Israel, was now there in his arms in the Person of Jesus. And this Baby was no mere religious teacher or prophet; He is God in the flesh. In Christ, God Himself has come to us to save us by His death. For this reason, each of us Christians may depart in peace, the very peace of Christ.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and ever-living God, as Your only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in the substance of our flesh, grant that we may be presented to You with pure and clean hearts; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Tuesday of Septuagesima

FEBRUARY 3, 2026

Today's Reading: Exodus 17:1-7

Daily Lectionary: Zechariah 14:1-21; Titus 2:7-3:15

"Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.' And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel." (Exodus 17:6)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

It often seems that the more we have, the more we complain. Think of a child who gets everything he or she wants and still throws a fit in the toy store. We chuckle or roll our eyes at such a child, but if we are honest, we have all acted like that. Perhaps it was not in the toy aisle, but in our hearts, our homes, and even our prayers.

In modern life, especially in the United States, we are constantly surrounded by abundance. The average American household ranks among the top 1% of global income earners. We have homes, cars, phones, entertainment, food, and medicine in abundance. These gifts are things that previous generations could not even have seen in their sweetest of dreams. And yet we still find things to be dissatisfied about. Whether coveting a better job, a newer phone, more vacation time, or different people in our lives, we grumble, even when our lives are overflowing with gifts.

Spiritually speaking, this grumbling is not a small thing. It reveals that we are often ungrateful toward God. The Lord teaches us to pray for daily bread, and He provides it, but instead of giving thanks, we often complain that it is not the kind of bread we wanted. This is the sin of Israel in the wilderness. God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. He parted the Red Sea, fed them with manna from heaven, and led them by a pillar of cloud and fire. Yet they grumbled: "Why did you bring us out here to die? We miss Egypt!"

But God did something remarkable. He did not destroy His people. He did not send them back to Egypt. Instead, He gave them water from a rock, a miraculous sign of His grace and provision. And that rock, says St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:4, was Christ. He is the Rock from whom living water flows. He is the One who hears our complaints, bears our sins, and still gives us grace. Even for ungrateful people like us, He offers forgiveness and life. So repent of your grumbling. Return thanks to God. And drink deeply of the mercy that flows from Christ your Rock.

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

O my God, my rock and tower, grant that in Your death I trust, knowing death has lost its power since You crushed it in the dust. Amen. (LSB 421:6)

Wednesday of Septuagesima

FEBRUARY 4, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:24-10:5

Daily Lectionary: Job 1:1-22; John 1:1-18

"But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:27)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

The Christian life is a life of discipline. We do not let the passions of the flesh, our bodily desires and appetites, rule over us. We do not indulge every fancy or feeling we have. We certainly do not assume that whatever our inner selves want is automatically good and right. As Jesus says, "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person" (Matthew 15:11).

St. Paul warns us here of the real spiritual danger in allowing our sinful desires to go unchecked. We must discipline ourselves. We must struggle daily against sin. We must drown the Old Adam, our sinful nature, in the waters of our Baptism every single day. And this is no mere lifestyle management. As Paul goes on to note, if we allow ourselves to grow complacent and let down our guard, we may find ourselves drifting away from the faith and forfeiting the promises given in Christ, just as not everyone who crossed the Red Sea entered the Promised Land.

This is a hard but necessary Word from God, spoken through the Apostle Paul. We are encouraged to fight the good fight, run the race faithfully, and remain diligent and watchful against sin and every form of evil in our own persons. We must resist the popular idea that doctrine is unimportant, that all religions are equally true, or that all our inborn desires are good and wholesome.

In a world that tells us to follow our hearts and trust our feelings, St. Paul reminds us that the Christian life is not about comfort, but cross-bearing. Discipline is not about self-perfection; it is about staying close to Jesus. And what is the reward of this disciplined life? The very salvation won for us by Christ. Not because our efforts earn this great gift, but because such discipline keeps our eyes fixed on the prize. It keeps us oriented away from this world and its countless distractions and our attention fixed on our Savior. We do not run aimlessly. We do not live without purpose. Our goal is Christ, the One who gave Himself for us and our forgiveness.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Let no false doctrine me beguile; Let 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. Amen. (LSB 708:2)

Thursday of Septuagesima

FEBRUARY 5, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Fourth Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Job 2:1-3:10; John 1:19-34

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Honor your father and your mother. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

The Fourth Commandment is simple to understand. Even small children know they should listen to their parents. The issue is not understanding, but rather obeying. This should not be difficult. After all, this command includes a promise: a long and peaceful life in the land the Lord gives. And this truth is not hidden from our everyday experience. Where there is order, peace, and respect for authority, communities thrive. Where there is disobedience, rebellion, and lawlessness, there is often pain, instability, and ruin.

God has structured His creation with relationships of authority and submission, such as parents and children, teachers and students, employers and workers, and governments and citizens. We may try to flatten these differences in the name of equality, but the reality remains that we live in a world of hierarchy. This is by God's design, and that design is good. This is not to say every authority is perfect. No parent, pastor, teacher, or governor rules without flaw. Yet Scripture teaches that all legitimate authority is given by God to preserve order and serve the good of others. So, the Fourth Commandment does not only speak to children and citizens. It also calls those in authority to act with fairness, humility, and care for those under their authority. Leadership is not a license to dominate; it is a God-given duty to serve.

When authority works as God intends, it is a Gift. It brings stability, direction, and peace. Obedience to this commandment honors God because it reflects trust in the order He has established for our good. Still, we must admit that we have not kept this commandment. We have rebelled against parents, scoffed at teachers, and disrespected officials. But where we fail, Christ does not. He submitted perfectly to His earthly parents and to His heavenly Father, even to death on a cross. Because of Jesus, our disobedience is forgiven. In Baptism, we are raised to new life. God's grace not only forgives our failures, but it also gives us the eyes to see that structure and authority are good Gifts given for our benefit and the benefit of those around us.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, as you honored your mother, Mary, and earthly father Joseph, help me to likewise honor, obey, love, and respect my father and mother. Teach me to love them as You have loved me and grant each of us to grow in faith and the knowledge of Your wholesome Word. Amen.

Friday of Septuagesima

FEBRUARY 6, 2026

Today's Reading: Job 3:11-26

Daily Lectionary: John 1:35-51

"I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, but trouble comes." (Job 3:26)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Everyone has a bad day. Some days are worse than others. In fact, some are downright terrible. Job had one of these terrible times. He was robbed of his children, his possessions, even his health. The book of Job is often hard to read. He is utterly miserable, even longing for death. This is not easy stuff for us to hear or think about. And while preachers and teachers often hold up Job as a model of steadfast faith amid hardship, we should not overlook the depth of his despair.

Statistically speaking, many today feel just like Job. Anxiety and depression, even to the point of wishing for death, are increasingly common. Chances are, everyone reading this either knows someone who suffers from these afflictions or has struggled with them personally. What makes this kind of suffering so difficult is that it is not visible like a physical wound. There is no easy bandage or quick remedy for the grief of the heart and the anguish of the soul.

But the book of Job does not leave him wallowing in the dust. His friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar came to sit with him. They did not get everything right; they even made some things worse with their advice. But they came. They showed up. They sat in silence for seven days. And even in their imperfection, they remind us what Christian compassion can look like. We may not be able to fix a given situation or explain it, but we can show up.

Most importantly, God did not abandon Job. Though Job struggled, he never cursed God, because he knew, somehow, that God was still his Redeemer. And Job was right. In chapter 19, Job makes a bold confession: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth." He believed in the resurrection. He trusted in a Deliverer.

God does not promise us a life without suffering. In fact, He prepares us to expect it. But He does give us something even greater: Jesus Christ, who suffered in our place, endured the cross, and rose again. He meets us in our darkest days and leads us through death and despair to resurrection and life everlasting.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

When in the hour of deepest need we know not where to look for aid; when days and nights of anxious thought no help or counsel yet have brought, then is our comfort this alone that we may meet before Your throne; to You, O faithful God, we cry for rescue in our misery. For You have promised, Lord, to heed Your children's cries in time of need through Him whose name alone is great, our Savior and our advocate. Amen. (LSB 615:1-3)

Saturday of Septuagesima

FEBRUARY 7, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Sexagesima - Psalm 44:1-2, 7-8; antiphon: Psalm 44:23, 25a, 26a

Daily Lectionary: Job 4:1-21; John 2:1-12

"But you have saved us from our foes and have put to shame those who hate us. In God we have boasted continually, and we will give thanks to your name forever." (Psalm 44:7-8)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God has enemies. And by extension, so do those who are baptized into Christ and bear His holy Name. That may sound strange at first. Who would be foolish enough to stand against the Almighty? And yet the Devil did exactly that. He rebelled, and ever since, he has waged war against God and His people. Death entered the world as a result of sin, a grim reminder that the world is not the way it was meant to be. Sin itself constantly seeks to overthrow the Lord and set up idols in His place, false gods of wealth, comfort, power, and self.

These enemies of Satan, death, and sin are no match for God, but they are formidable foes for us. Death breaks into our lives, stealing loved ones and filling us with dread. The Devil entices with lies that seem reasonable, and he preys on our weaknesses. Sin deceives us into thinking we know better than God. And we must admit that we are not just victims. Our sinful nature eagerly follows along. The old Adam within us is not reluctant; he is a willing participant in rebellion.

But God is not absent or passive. His strength is not found in raw displays of power, but in the humility and sacrifice of Christ Jesus. The cross, which looks like weakness and foolishness to the world, is in truth the power of God unto salvation. There, Christ disarmed the Devil, broke the power of death, and bore the weight of all sin. What looked like defeat was the decisive victory.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, the enemies of God and of us, His people, have been put to shame. The Devil has lost his accusing voice. Death has lost its sting. Sin has been atoned for. And so, like the psalmist, we boast in the Lord. We boast not in ourselves, not in our strength, but in Christ alone. He has saved us from these terrible foes.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

O little flock, fear not the foe who madly seeks your overthrow; dread not his rage and pow'r. And though your courage sometimes faints, his seeming triumph o'er God's saints lasts but a little hour. Amen. (LSB 666:1)

Sexagesima

FEBRUARY 8, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 8:4-15

Daily Lectionary: Job 5:1-27; John 2:13-25

"And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, 'A sower went out to sow his seed.'" (Luke 8:4-5)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

It's a strange time of year for a gardening lesson, isn't it? As I write this, I am sitting poolside in the sunshine, watching my kids during swimming lessons. That is the time for a planting lesson. But as you read this in the dead of winter, snow on the ground, if you're in the north, frozen tundra, and Jesus speaks to us about planting. PLANTING! I don't even have any seeds ready!

Why would this be the appointed reading for a Sunday in February? We are closer to Christmas than planting season. It's strange. Strange until you realize what Jesus is explaining. Not prepping for the coming growing season, but giving us a lesson on the Trinity.

In the explanation of the parable, Jesus says the agent who works faith through the Word of God is the heavenly gardener, the great cultivator of faith, the Holy Spirit, and we know He works in mysterious ways. Where He works, how He works, is not revealed to us until we see the fruits of faith displayed in others. Just like Jesus said in the parable. The seed is planted, but the gardener knows not how until he first sees the blade, then the ear, and then the full grain in the ear.

Oh, how that seed, faith, is sustained! The Holy Spirit uses Holy fertilizer! First, there is the Word of God! This will be the focus of tomorrow's Reflection. But know that it is through our hearing that our faith is nourished and strengthened.

There is also His most holy meal, the Lord's Supper! For, as the Pastor says, as he places into your hands the bread and wine, "The Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins." He also says after your reception of this holy food, "The Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you to life everlasting." The Giver of the feast offers nothing other than Himself to for your benefit, for your eternal good. Nothing is greater than that!

This is the blueprint for the planting, growth, and sustaining of faith. God be praised that He does it all for our sake.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in You, mercifully grant that by Your power we may be defended against adversity; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect of the Day for Sexagesima)

Monday of Sexagesima

FEBRUARY 9, 2026

Today's Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13

Daily Lectionary: Job 6:1-13; John 3:1-21

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Wouldn't it be great to have a purpose in life? This is the question we spend the majority of our lives contemplating and attempting to figure out. We want nothing more than to have a purpose and to then fulfill that purpose. What is crazy is that you are forced to decide in high school what you think your purpose is. You are constantly asked what you want to be when you grow up. Adults ask it as if they expect you to know your future perfectly. But how difficult that question is to answer! Even when we are well into the career path we have chosen, the question continues to arise: Is this it? Am I doing what I am meant to do? Am I making the difference I set out to make? I can't lie; I ask myself this question all the time. We have a beautiful verse about purpose today. It's not your purpose; it is about the purpose of the Word of God. St. John says it best. Concerning the words of his Gospel, he says, "These things are written that you may believe and that by believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:31)

The purpose of the Word is to bring us to forgiveness, life, and salvation. It does this through the doctrines of Law and Gospel. The Law, which is spread throughout the Scriptures, is most often thought of as that which was given through the words of the Lord God, which He spoke to Moses. When confronted with the Law, every part of it, we realize that we have miserably failed at every chance of keeping it. We realize that we deserve nothing but death and punishment because of our actions and inaction.

Then, when we are beaten down, the Gospel enters in! The great news is that our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, who bore the weight of our sins upon the cross of Calvary, died and rose again, FOR YOU! The great news is that, though we sin daily and deserve punishment, Jesus has taken that punishment for you and gives you his perfection. What a relief knowing that we are saved solely by the work of Jesus! While we may change our minds about our purpose and plans, the Word of God will always remain to bring liberty to the captives and freedom to those oppressed. It is to deliver to you Christ and Him crucified. Thanks be to God!

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Prayer for grace to receive the Word (148))

Tuesday of Sexagesima

FEBRUARY 10, 2026

Today's Reading: 2 Corinthians 11:19-12:9

Daily Lectionary: Job 6:14-30; John 3:22-4:6

"He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" (2 Corinthians 12:9)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

What an excellent reminder of what we discussed on Monday, how our Lord plants the seeds of faith everywhere, even in places that seem unlikely. We all know Paul's past, soiled with persecution of Christians, dragging men, women, and children bound in chains to Jerusalem to be put to death for following "the Way" Acts 9:2. And yet, the seed which was planted in his heart bore fruit that day on the road to Damascus.

You would think that going from persecutor to champion of the faith would be a great lifestyle change—from turmoil to tranquil, almost. However, Paul's life, post-conversion, post-planting of the faith (though his heart was indeed a pleasant planting), was anything but a peaceful valley of blooming flowers.

The words that we read today, especially from 2 Corinthians 12, are very familiar to us. "Thorns in the flesh." "Messengers of Satan." He never says exactly what this struggle that plagues him is, and for good reason. The truth is, these messengers and thorns show up in all shapes, sizes, and forms. Satan surrounds us day and night to harass us and steal our focus from where it should be.

Dark secrets, addictions, hatred, jealousy, whatever it is, they all seek to distract us from the truth, turn our eyes away from God, and in turn destroy our faith. As we daily struggle with these thorns, Paul's prayer, while not specifically written down, becomes our prayer. "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" (2 Corinthians 12:8-9)

God's grace is sufficient. God's grace strengthens and sustains you. In His Grace, He sent His only begotten Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. So that He would, by what is seen as weakness by worldly standards (being betrayed, beaten, and crucified, and in a humiliating way), He would reveal His power and glory. And, what is more, by the death of the only begotten Son, He would destroy the messengers and thorns of Satan!

It is by our Baptism into the death and resurrection of His Son that the victory has been passed on to us. He has cast out the messengers of Satan that harass us. They have been rendered powerless against us by the work of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for such sufficient grace!

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

By Grace! On this I'll rest when dying; In Jesus' promise I rejoice; For though I know my heart's condition, I also know my Savior's voice. My heart is glad, all grief has flown Since I am saved by grace alone. (LSB 566:6)

Wednesday of Sexagesima

FEBRUARY 11, 2026

Today's Reading: Job 7:1-21

Daily Lectionary: John 4:7-26

"What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him, visit him every morning and test him every moment?" (Job 7:17-18)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Not the most uplifting text from Job 7, is it? So much so that I almost didn't pick it.

Job wasn't very happy...and why should he be? His life was in shambles, a complete disaster. He lost children, servants, animals, everything! And in His sorrow and depression, he has the wherewithal to write it all down? Not to be mean, but who would want to read an entire chapter of complaining? Did you happen to catch the title of Job 7? "My life has no hope." It is a Biblical temper tantrum! And yet, in the midst of his frustrations, there is a clear Gospel message. Look at verses 1-21 again. Did you see it? Probably not. But, I promise it is there!

Think about this. Job is complaining to no end, having a bit of a hissy fit. Who, I ask you, heard that hissy fit? Who heard Job as he complained about his miserable life?

God! Job felt unrighteous and unworthy in every way. Even though he felt that he had been abandoned to Sheol, even though he felt lonely, sad, and even a bit depressed, guess what? It was only a feeling. And that feeling was far from the truth. God was there. The truth is, though Job had lost so much, though He felt like all was lost and that he was alone, God never left Job's side!

You might not feel all that different from Job. Abandoned, lonely, depressed, unholy, unworthy of the love of the Father. And yet, God is as near to you as He was to Job! You are in His presence daily because He is always with you. Through Confession and Absolution, He purifies you and brings you into His presence as you come into His holy house to be served by Him each Lord's Day.

This was the same truth for the woman in our other reading today from John 4, whom Jesus encountered at the well. She didn't belong in the presence of Jesus any more than Jesus belonged at the well at high noon. And yet, the love of Jesus knows no barriers. He doesn't come only to those who are worthy and pure. For Jesus Himself says, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10) He Himself is the purifier and perfector of all things through His death upon the cross.

And what joy, He comes, calls, and purifies you for His name's sake. Thanks be to God.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Just as I am, without one plea But that Thy blood was shed for me And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee O Lamb of God I come, I come. (LSB 570:1)

Thursday of Sexagesima

FEBRUARY 12, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Fifth Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Job 8:1-22; John 4:27-45

You shall not murder. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

This might sound absurd to say, but the Fifth Commandment is a hard life lesson to learn. Face value, it could be our favorite, though. You shall not kill? I will go out on a limb and say that everyone reading this devotion today can say, "Yes! I have kept this commandment! I haven't killed anyone, mark it down as the only commandment I have kept!"

Enter Martin Luther, who is the killjoy of the party. The Lord God says, "You shall not kill." Luther says in his explanation of this Commandment, "We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body..." (Explanation of the 5th Commandment) How many can check that box? A few less to be sure. And then we realize Jesus has something to say about this. He says, "Everyone who is angry with his brother is liable to judgment... [and] the fires of hell." (Matthew 5:22)

St. John even gets in on the action and says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." (1 John 3:15)

All of a sudden, we are all standing here condemned by the Law in the sight of God, realizing we deserve to be cast into the outer darkness, where Jesus says there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Thanks be to God for the Gospel! Praise God, He has taught us through parents, pastors, and teachers that even this sin lies forgiven in His sight for the sake of Jesus. To the one who hates His brother, who has hurt or harmed his brother, even the one who has taken a life, Jesus took that to the cross and died for it.

Understand, it is for this reason that God continues to send His messengers to call us to repentance. Jesus' death is the payment for ALL sin. What the prophet Ezekiel was inspired to write is true!

"Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. 31 Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live." (Ezekiel 18:30-32)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Chief of Sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me. Died that I might live on high, Lives that I might never die. As the branch is to the vine, I am His and He is mine. (LSB 611:1)

Friday of Sexagesima

FEBRUARY 13, 2026

Today's Reading: John 4:46-54

Daily Lectionary: Job 9:1-35

Jesus said to him, 'Go; your son will live.' (John 4:50)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Isn't it amazing how Jesus can make the most ridiculously absurd statements and no one from among His followers ever questions Him? Pharisees and Saducees seemingly get paid by the inquiry, but that's for another time. But really, if we made some of the claims Jesus did, people would stare at us and no doubt argue. Not so, though, with Jesus. Because Jesus does something we cannot do. He backs up every statement He makes with proof, with action. In fact, without fail, everything He says comes to pass! What a reading we have before us today. In John 4, Jesus heals the official's son. The man desperately searches out the One he has heard could do something for his son—heal him before he dies. If only we had the faith of this official. While we give lip service to knowing the One who heals the sick, casts out demons, raises the dead, and saves the sinner, all too often our actions don't support that. Deep down, we cling to bits of doubt. Yes, Jesus has healed, but what if He doesn't this time?

Sure, He has risen from the dead, but what if I am not worthy enough? I know He has forgiven some sins, but what if He doesn't forgive mine? Surely I have to assist in salvation in some way. Such thinking is dangerous and does not seem to enter the mind of the official in our text. "The official said to him, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your son will live.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering." (John 4:49-51) Now, here is what we need to remember from this account. First, what faith this man has to believe Jesus would do exactly what He says. Second, Jesus NEVER enters the official's house. He NEVER physically looks upon his dying child. He doesn't need to. His power does not lie solely in seeing or touching... No! What we sing in the hymn "Thy Strong Word" is absolutely true. What breaks the darkness? What bespeaks us righteous? The strong, powerful Word of God! In Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, Creation, the Word of God holds ALL the power! It does. In His Word, He declares you to be His precious child. In His Word, He declares you forgiven of all your sins! In the Word which became flesh and dwelt among us, who took you who were dead in your trespasses and sins and raised you to new life. Nothing our Lord says is ridiculous, absurd, or untrue. He speaks peace, truth, and life for you. Which is why He urges us to "abide in My word." (John 8:31) Remain in that which holds all the power. That which creates, gives light, and makes us righteous. The Word of God.

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Thy strong word did cleave the darkness At Thy speaking it was done For created light we thank Thee While Thy ordered seasons run. (LSB 578:1)

Saturday of Sexagesima

FEBRUARY 14, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Quinquagesima - Psalm 31:1, 5, 9, 16; antiphon: Psalm 31:2b-3

Daily Lectionary: Job 10:1-22; John 5:1-18

"In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame;" (Psalm 31:1)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

One thing that we will all search for throughout our lifetime and never really seem to find is security. It could be financial security, security in our social status, job security, you name it, we long for it. But why strive for something, waste time and energy on something we will never attain? Ecclesiastes 2 says, "I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun." Why strive and toil for nothing?

What comfort is given to us in the Introit for tomorrow, Quinquagesima? Do you want security in life? You want comfort that everything is going to be okay? Then look to the words of David in Psalm 31!

Know and believe that our status on earth, our favor in the sight of man, and what we accumulate for ourselves in this life is worthless. It is the vanity that Solomon writes of in Ecclesiastes. What matters is our standing in the sight of God.

David writes: "In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness... Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God."

Psalm 31 perfectly sums up what we have been talking about all week. Our lives are not perfect, nor was David's. We have no right to be brought into His presence nor to go before His throne asking for anything. And yet He urges us to treat Him as our Father. To call upon Him in all circumstances. To trust in Him at all times. To take refuge in Him in all circumstances.

And so it is we speak and confess along with David, saying, "In you, LORD, I have taken refuge." What a true blessing it is to be able to commit ourselves to the Lord Most High, knowing that He has already acted on our behalf! Knowing that He has defeated the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. Knowing that we rest in his unfailing love. Knowing He has already spoken the words which deliver us and give us eternal life.

Friends, the love and faithfulness of God is our safety and comfort in this life filled with vanity and striving after the wind, filled with sin and sadness. The Lord God has overcome them all for us.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, "Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love." Amen. (Psalm 31:16)

Quinquagesima

FEBRUARY 15, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 18:31-43

Daily Lectionary: Job 11:1-20; John 5:19-29

"And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'" (Luke 18:39)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Have you ever had someone ask you to do something, and you didn't listen to them? A parent? A friend? A sibling? A teacher? A coach? A boss? Or have you ever asked someone to do something for you, and they didn't listen to you?

Depending on the situation, sometimes when people don't listen to what we're saying, in order to get them to hear us, we might shout it. I have three kids, ages nine, seven, and four. There have been plenty of times where we've had to shout at our kids because we want to keep them safe (crossing the street without looking, running in a parking lot, running on a dock without a life jacket on, play fighting with pointy sticks, the list goes on and on).

The blind beggar cried out to Jesus because he wanted Him. When the people tried to silence him, he cried out even louder. Even though this blind beggar had not seen Jesus, he had heard about Him and believed in Him. Sometimes you hear faith described as "believing without seeing." Certainly, in this instance, it's fitting. And what did he want from Jesus? Mercy. I've sometimes heard mercy described as "not getting what we deserve."

We, who have not seen Jesus, ask Him to be merciful to us, too. In our confession of sins, sometimes we say the words of the tax collector, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). We do not deserve God's forgiveness because we are sinners. We deserve death, we deserve Hell. God would be just and right in giving us that. Instead, God in His mercy gives us Jesus to be the atonement for our sins, sacrificing His life voluntarily on the cross for us, not giving us what we deserve. He gives what we deserve to Jesus. Jesus suffered death and Hell for us.

And in faith, gifted to us by the Holy Spirit, we receive Christ's mercy. In faith, we don't get Hell; we get heaven and eternal life. Thanks be to God!

And in our daily living, we can cry out to God for healing, for help in struggles, for whatever we need. And no matter how loud we are, we know He hears us, and answers according to His good and gracious will.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

O God of mercy, God of might, in love and pity infinite, teach us, as ever in Thy sight, to live our lives in Thee. And Thou, who cam'st on earth to die that our lost world might live thereby, O hear us; for to Thee we cry, in hope O Lord, to Thee. (LSB 852:1, 2)

Monday of Quinquagesima

FEBRUARY 16, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-13 or Isaiah 35:3-7

Daily Lectionary: Job 12:1-6, 12-25; John 5:30-47

"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'" (1 Samuel 16:7)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

I'm the youngest in my family, like David. And while I can't tell you that I'm like David in that I'm a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22), what I can tell you is that maybe I did have a similar stature to David. For most of my life, I was the smallest kid in the class. At the end of 8th grade, heading into high school, I was 4'11". When I graduated high school, I was 5'5". In all those years of school, I was never picked first for any sports teams, even though I felt like I could be just as good as everyone else. I was usually one of the last ones picked (I was also much shyer than I am today, so I wasn't one to speak up for myself). In college, I grew another five inches. I was a bit of a late bloomer, but that still just makes me kind of average.

And what if God were to look at my heart? What if He looks at the desires within it, what will He find? Evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander (Matthew 15:19), and an abundance of other things not mentioned (greed, pride, selfishness, etc.). I can't become a man after God's own heart—not on my own, at least.

I need someone to make my heart clean. Peter talks about God, who knows the heart, bore witness to the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit just like He did to the Jews, and cleansed their hearts by faith (Acts 15:8-9).

The Good News is that my heart is clean. Not by my own doing, but through the waters of Baptism, where I have been washed through the water and the Word, where the Holy Spirit has been given to me, Jesus has marked me as one redeemed by Him, called me by name, brought me into His family, rescued me from death and the devil, and gives to me eternal life, because of faith, which was present in my Baptism.

I still have moments where I will stumble and fall, just like David. And I am forgiven and restored when I am brought to repentance, just like David. And through God's work alone, in me, I can be a man after His own heart.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-11)

Tuesday of Quinquagesima

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Daily Lectionary: Job 13:1-12; John 6:1-21

"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." (1 Corinthians 13:7-8)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

1 Corinthians 13 is a Scripture you might hear quite often at weddings. As a man and woman stand in the presence of God and His people, they declare their love for one another. They make vows to one another, they exchange rings, and are pronounced husband and wife. The vows they make are until death parts them, which means the commitment that they are making to each other to be husband and wife is to love each other in sickness and health, for better or worse, richer or poorer, in the good days and the bad, no matter what life brings them. They are committing to love that never ends. Until it does end.

Because not every man and woman who makes those promises to one another keeps them. Not every man and woman who promises to love their spouse until death parts them does exactly that. If you're a child of divorce, like me, or if you have seen marriages of people that are close to you end, like me, you might know this quite well.

So, why does this happen? Why do marriages end? Why can't people keep their promises? Why can't people love no matter the circumstances? In short, sin. Sin has caused all of us to be imperfect people. And imperfect people have imperfect marriages. Imperfect people don't keep promises. Imperfect people love conditionally, rather than unconditionally. This means their love for their spouse is conditional on certain things (their spouse loves them in return, does certain things for them making them worthy/deserving to be loved, etc.). If those conditions are not met, the spouse thinks he/she does not have to love them.

Thank goodness this is not how God loves us! He loves us unconditionally. This means that His love for us is not conditional on anything we do. If it were, I know that God would not have very much love for me at all. I am unworthy of God's love, and He still loves me. In fact, He loves me so much that He sent His Only Son, Jesus Christ, for ME. To die on the cross for me, rise from the dead for me, for my sins, to bring me forgiveness, life, and salvation. And He has done the same for YOU. The unconditional, sacrificial love that God has for us is seen most clearly in Jesus Christ, who is the bridegroom of His bride, the Church. And His love for us never ends.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Father, You created Adam, crafted Eve, and made them one; Jesus, from their sin You saved us, as God's true incarnate Son; Holy Spirit, You forgive us; from our sins we are released. Bring us, Lord, at last to heaven, to the endless wedding feast. (LSB 860:5)

Ash Wednesday

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 1:1-19; Mark 1:1-13

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

When you think about treasure, maybe you think about buried treasure, chests full of gold, pirates searching for that which is lost, maps where X marks the spot.

Martin Luther said in theses #62 (of 95), "the true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God."

The treasure of the Gospel is not about buried chests of gold; rather, it's about the death and burial of Jesus, who saves us "not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). It's not about pirates searching for lost treasure; it's about the Good Shepherd who seeks to save His lost sheep and bring all people to Himself. It's not about maps where X marks the spot. And if you rotate the X just a little bit, it becomes the shape of a cross. The cross marks the spot where true treasure is found, that cannot perish, spoil, or fade.

Today is Ash Wednesday. There's a Lutheran joke that talks about a pastor who, on Ash Wednesday, says, "We are but dust." To which the little kid in the pew says to their parent, "What's butt dust?"

Ash Wednesday reminds us that we are but dust in the sense that "for you are dust and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). The ashes remind us that death is the punishment for our sin. And one day, when death comes for us, we might have a pastor speak over our body, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," as we are laid in the ground. But the ashes in the shape of a cross remind us that even though death may await us, physical death that is, Christ has given His life that we would not face eternal death, Hell. The cross reminds us of the Good News that Jesus took on the fullness of our humanity. He who was without sin became sin for us. And on the cross, He generously gave up His life out of love for us. But Jesus does not return to the dust of the ground because He rises from the dead on the third day. And so, the cross on our foreheads reminds us that though we may return to the dust, we will also rise to new life in Christ on the day of resurrection. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, resurrection to resurrection, and life to life.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

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

Thursday After Ash Wednesday

FEBRUARY 19, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Sixth Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 1:20-2:3; Mark 1:14-28

"You shall not commit adultery. What does this mean?" (Sixth Commandment, Luther's Small Catechism)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

I have been a Lutheran for almost my whole life. I was baptized when I was just a couple of months old. I like to think of myself as a first-generation Lutheran because my mom and her whole family were Catholic until my brother and I were baptized in the Lutheran Church. What I have found in these 40+ years of being a Lutheran is that while Luther is great, he doesn't compare to Christ. While Luther in his catechism uses the phrase "what does this mean?", we've seen it before in God's Word (Exodus 13:14, Acts 2:12).

God's Word gives us this Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery. We then insert, "What does this mean?" to which we hear: "We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other."

I'm going to be honest. Not my favorite commandment. I'd love to skip over this one. But I won't. I shouldn't. After all, it's one of God's Ten Commandments, right? I mean, two days ago we were talking about love and marriage, and now we get to talk about... lust. Well, lust is one part of this commandment, since God tells us, "everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). I have done this too many times to count. Probably more often prior to being married, but even in marriage, the temptation is there. To desire something, someone, whom I have not made vows or promises to. Even though I cannot count the number of times I've broken the Sixth Commandment, every time God has brought me to repentance for these sins, He has forgiven me. More times than I can count. More times than I deserve.

And then, by God's grace, I try to lead a life that is pleasing in His sight, not breaking the Sixth Commandment. I cannot do this on my own. I cannot love my wife sacrificially, unconditionally, honoring her with my own strength, without first knowing God's sacrificial, unconditional love for me. Thanks be to God that I can clearly see that in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

I don't know what God has in store for you and your life, but my prayer is that He would help you lead a sexually pure and decent life in your singleness, and in your married life if the blessing of a spouse is given to you.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

O Spirit of the Father, breathe on them from above, so searching in Your purity, so tender in Your love that, guarded by Your presence, and kept from strife and sin, their hearts may heed Your guidance, and know You dwell within (LSB 858:3)

Friday After Ash Wednesday

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 1:29-45

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 2:4-25; Mark 1:29-45

“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.” (Mark 1:35)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Healings and more healings. This is what Jesus is doing. But amidst the healings is prayer. Jesus prays. We see this quite often with Jesus, that He goes off alone to pray. Sometimes it's to present specific requests to God and we get to hear them (like the High Priestly Prayer in John 17, or Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane), but sometimes we don't get to hear the conversation He has alone with the Father. We do see that once He finishes praying, He's ready for what comes next. It's almost as if spending time alone with His Father in prayer refreshes, renews, and energizes Him. In Mark 1, after Jesus prays, He sets off for what's next: more healings.

Life can be exhausting sometimes. I don't know if you would describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert. All of us can get tired, exhausted, and worn down from something, whether it's the stresses we face, the pressures of school, family, work, or something else, like just living life. Some introverts are refreshed by being alone, spending time with themselves. I am not one of those people. I get refreshed and energized by being with people.

Spending time in prayer can refresh us because we get to be with the One who created us, we get to cast all of our cares, concerns, worries, issues, and burdens on the One who is able to not only handle all of our stuff, but the One who can actually do something about our stuff. This doesn't mean that all of our prayers will be answered. Jesus knew what God's will was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He prayed for His will to be done. He also asked that the cup would be removed from Him, even though He knew it wouldn't be.

Paul writes, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, who brought peace between us and God through His death and resurrection, gives us peace no matter what God's answer to our prayers is. In Him we can have peace knowing that He is always with us when He says no, and when He says yes.

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)

Saturday After Ash Wednesday

FEBRUARY 21, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Lent 1 - Psalm 91:1-2, 9-10, 13; antiphon: Psalm 91:15a, c, 16

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 3:1-24; Mark 2:1-17

"With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91:16)

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

I'm not from Missouri, but I know that Missouri is known as the "Show Me" state. You might know the phrase "actions speak louder than words." We can say lots of things, but if our actions don't support our words, you can certainly doubt whether or not the person speaking those words really means it. So too, with love. We can say that we love someone, but if our actions seem contrary to our words, one might question the love we have for them. In other words, if you love me, show me!

On Good Friday, the people who were gathered at the cross asked Jesus to show them that He really was who He said He was, the Son of God, by coming down from the cross. One of the criminals on the cross next to Jesus even told Him to save Himself and the two of them on either side of Him. Except the ONLY way that Jesus could show everyone that He really was who He said He was was by NOT coming down from the cross. The only way for Jesus to bring forgiveness and salvation was to remain there until He breathed His last breath and gave up His spirit. Love kept Jesus on the cross. Love for you, love for me, love for the whole world. And it is in His death and His subsequent resurrection from the dead where He is able to show them the salvation that He won for them. As Jesus appears to the women, the disciples, and over 500 people at one time, showing the nail marks in His hands and feet, and His side where the sword pierced Him, they are able to see just how Jesus saved them.

It is in His death and resurrection that He shows the world that He has defeated sin, death, and the power of the devil, once and for all. And if Christ is not risen from the dead, our faith is futile, we are still in our sins, and there is no salvation for us. Thanks be to God that Christ has indeed risen from the dead, and will one day come back and take us to be with Him! Thanks be to God that He has given us His Word, where we can hear of His salvation. And thanks be to God that the Holy Spirit creates faith in us through the hearing of that Word, so that by faith we know we also have salvation.

In the Name  of Jesus. Amen.

Christ the redeeming Son, who shares our human birth, and by His death salvation won for ev'ry child of earth; Inspire our hearts, we pray, to tell Your love abroad, that all may honor Christ today and follow Him as Lord.
(LSB 829:3)

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