



REFLECTIONS

First Sunday in Lent, Invocavit -
Holy Saturday

February 22, 2026 - April 4, 2026



This season's Reflections were written by

Rev. Chad Hoover serves as Campus Pastor and theology teacher at Concordia Lutheran High School in Fort Wayne, IN and pastoral assistant at Emanuel Lutheran Church in New Haven, IN

Rev. Aaron Schian is pastor at Grace Lutheran Church in Auburn, MI

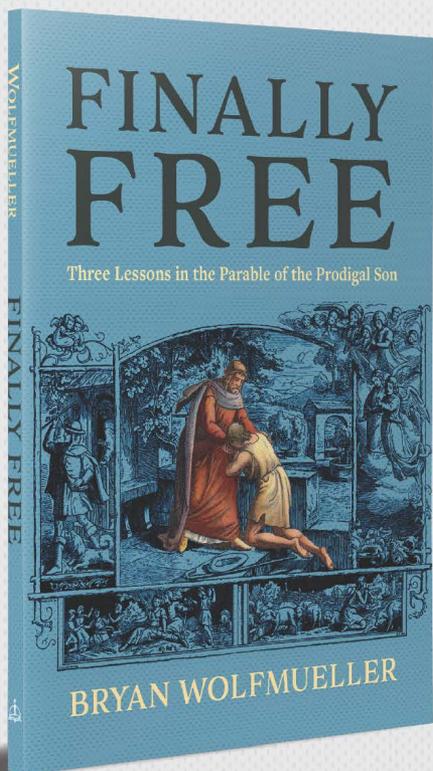
Rev. Daniel Burhop, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Reese, MI

Rev. James Douthwaite, pastor of Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church, Vienna, VA and Board Member of the Board for International Missions

Rev. Timothy Davis, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Athens, GA

Deac. Eleanor Corrow, Coordinator in LCMS Missionary Services

UNPACK THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON



Where can we see ourselves in this famous story from Jesus? In *Finally Free*, Bryan Wolfmueller digs into this parable to reveal three ways we are enslaved by sin: depravity, despair, and pride.

Discover how our dear Lord Jesus desires to set us free from each slavery in this powerful book.

ORDER AT CPH.ORG



Bryan Wolfmueller is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church and Jesus Deaf Lutheran Church in Austin, Texas. He is the author of popular titles such as *Has American Christianity Failed?* and *A Martyr's Faith in a Faithless World*.



1.800.325.3040

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.

First Sunday in Lent, Invocavit

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 4:1-11

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 4:1-26; Mark 2:18-28

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." (Matthew 4:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Because of our sinful nature, it doesn't always take a whole lot of prodding from Satan for us to succumb to temptation. Are you ever tempted by selfishness? After all, look at how much you've sacrificed for others.

Are you ever tempted to complain? Why not? There's certainly enough wrong with this world and my life to be upset. Are you ever tempted to pass the blame? It's a dog-eat-dog world out there. You've got to be a little unscrupulous if you want to succeed in life.

Are you ever tempted to worship something or someone else before God? There's always a temptation to neglect being in worship! Are you ever tempted by lust or by gossip or by greed? Are you ever tempted by worry or by laziness or by pride? How often do these temptations result in sinful action?

We cannot escape the daily assault of temptations that the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh visit upon us. And there is nothing that we can do to overcome them. For this reason, we need a Savior! Thanks be to God, this is the Savior we've been given in Christ Jesus.

Though He is God (100% divine), Jesus is also a human being (100% man). Because of this union, Jesus is the perfect human being who has done everything right where we have done wrong. He was tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin.

He fulfilled God's plan for the salvation of all the world and actively kept the Law of God perfectly for you. His perfect life wasn't just to show you how it's done, but it was actually a necessary part of God's plan to save you.

Not only is Jesus' dying part of God's plan, but also His living- His succeeding where we fail. And His success in withstanding Satan's temptations was perfect.

Now, through faith, the victory over Satan that Christ accomplished is your victory. He shares it fully and freely with you. What Jesus did right is credited to you; it is declared by God to be your own!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the Promised Land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Monday of the First Week in Lent

FEBRUARY 23, 2026

Today's Reading: Genesis 3:1-21

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 6:1-7:5; Mark 3:1-19

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." (Genesis 3:8)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Have you ever played hide and seek with a toddler? They're not very good at it. Either their incessant giggling or their inability to pull their entire body behind the sofa gives up their "hiding" spot in a matter of seconds.

How do you respond? You pretend you don't hear the child or that you don't see their rump sticking out from underneath the coffee table because it's all part of the game.

However, when Adam and Eve hid from God, it was no game at all. Their Fall into sin destroyed their peace and communion with God, and they hid from Him because they were afraid, and rightly so. God couldn't pretend that He didn't see their sin or that it wasn't offensive to Him. Their Fall had consequences.

Adam and Eve's attempts to hide from God were ill-fated. God knew where they were hiding, and He knew exactly why they were trying to hide from Him. And yet, remarkably, God sought them. He called out for them and gave them an opportunity to confess their sin. Instead, it turned into the blame game. Adam blamed Eve (and God)! Eve blamed the serpent! God's creation was destroyed.

Even still, this sin was not enough for God to stop loving His creation. Instead, He proclaimed the promise of redemption that would come through the seed of the woman, through Christ. He promised to care for mankind despite their Fall into sin.

We have all inherited the sinful nature from Adam. We know that we cannot hide our sin from God. He sees it all, and it is offensive to Him and deserving of His wrath and condemnation. But we also know that the Savior He promised to send has come. He has taken our sin upon Himself and cleanses us from it.

Although it can be painful for us to admit, we faithfully confess our sins, and God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

In Adam we have all been one, One huge rebellious man; We all have fled that evening voice That sought us as we ran . . . But Thy strong love, it sought us still And sent Thine only Son That we might hear His Shepherd's voice And, hearing Him, be one (LSB 569:1, 3)

St. Matthias, Apostle

FEBRUARY 24, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 11:25-30

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 7:11-8:12; Mark 3:20-35

"Jesus declared, 'Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'" (Matthew 11:28)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Our bodies need rest. Your brain can only study for so long before you need a break. Your voice can only practice singing for so long before it starts to get strained. Your muscles can only work out for so long before they get sore (and not in the good way- you don't get swell overnight, amiright?). A lot of times, we pride ourselves on working through the pain and struggle and boast about our achievements. But other times, we just get tired and we need to rest. Even then, is it always easy to shut your brain off and stop thinking about what else needs to be added to your list? Can you stop worrying about whether or not you've studied enough for the test, or wonder whether you've done enough reps to get ripped before Spring Break?

We struggle in this life, not only with bodily weariness, but also with spiritual weariness. Jesus invites us to rest in Him. He's the one who labors for us and assures us of everlasting rest in His kingdom.

Battles with sin will just keep coming in this life without reprieve. If we think we've conquered one sin, another is sure to arise and take its place. The Holy Spirit will continue to crush us with God's law, show us our sinfulness, and drive us to the despairing revelation that we are wretched in our sinfulness and tormented by this body of death (cf. Romans 7:24).

Here's the promise that God has revealed: through His Word, His Holy Spirit, through Baptism, through Communion, you are yoked with Christ. There is no burden to keep the law. There is no mystery about what needs to be done in order to have salvation. Christ has done it all for you! There is only the promise of life everlasting.

Even though we continue to struggle with sin and fail in the face of temptation, this is no indication of our status before God. Your status before Him is not determined by your ability to keep the law- rather, it is determined by your union with Christ.

The Christian's struggle against the sinful flesh is truly wearying and burdensome, but Christ has promised you rest. He's promised you life and everlasting salvation in His kingdom despite your sinfulness.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

I rest my soul on Jesus, This weary soul of mine; His right hand me embraces; I on His breast recline. I love the name of Jesus, Immanuel, Christ, the Lord; Like fragrance on the breezes His name abroad is poured (LSB 606:3)

Wednesday of the First Week in Lent

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

Today's Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 8:13-9:17; Genesis 9:18-11:26; Mark 4:1-20

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

It could be argued that the best coaches in professional sports are the ones who've been athletes on the field. Vince Lombardi, one of the greatest NFL coaches of all time (that Super Bowl trophy is named after him), understood that playing experience helped to make him a better coach. He once said, "Coaches who can outline plays on a blackboard are a dime a dozen. The ones who win get inside their player and motivate."

Can the same be said about Jesus Christ? Is He able to motivate us because He knows what it's like to be human? Is that what makes Him such a great savior... because He doesn't expect us to do anything that He hasn't done Himself?

It's certainly encouraging that Jesus knows what it's like to be human because He is an actual human being! He was conceived, grew, and developed in His mother's womb. He was born and continued to grow from childhood into adulthood, just like human beings do. Throughout His life on earth, He experienced hunger, weariness, sadness, and anger. In every respect, He knows what it's like to be human, and yet He lived His life without sin.

He can sympathize with our weaknesses, but He hasn't excused them. It's not like after His 33-year stint on earth, He reported back to His Father, "You know what, that was really hard. I think the expectation You have from them is just too high. You need to lower Your standards and give them some credit for trying real hard. I barely made it. You can't expect them to do much better."

Jesus came in the flesh, not to motivate. He came in the flesh as our substitute- to take our place under God's wrath against sin. He came to cover your sin with His righteousness. If He had not done this, we could never approach His throne of grace with confidence. Instead, we would live our lives in constant fear and trepidation, wondering if we've lived our lives "good enough" to be accepted by Him.

Because Christ is our Great High Priest, who has succeeded where we have fallen short and showered us with God's grace and mercy, we have great confidence and hold fast the confession of faith that's been revealed to us.

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

O Christ, You walked the road Our wand'ring feet must go. Stay with us through temptation's hour To fight our ancient foe. (LSB 424:5)

Thursday of the First Week in Lent

FEBRUARY 26, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Seventh Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 11:27-12:20; Mark 4:21-41

"We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income." (Luther's Small Catechism, The Seventh Commandment - What does this mean?)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The letter of the law says, "You shall not steal." (That's in Exodus 20:15 by the way. God also reiterates this command for the Israelite people in Leviticus 19:11 and Deuteronomy 5:19. Jesus also emphasizes the importance of this commandment, as recorded in Matthew 19:18, Mark 10:19, and Luke 18:10). Why does it matter whether or not we steal?

First of all, it tells us that God cares about your possessions. After all, whatever you have in this life is ultimately a gift from Him. Remember that the explanation to the First Article of the Creed in Luther's Small Catechism says God "gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life." This truth is reinforced when we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," which includes God's daily provision for you. Isn't it interesting how all of these things are related and how the Seventh Commandment protects those gifts that God has given to you?

In our sinfulness, we're inclined to focus only upon ourselves, our own possessions, and the blessings that God has given to us. We're also tempted to gain more possessions for ourselves through dishonesty and deceit. But God calls us to put others above ourselves and recognize the gifts that He has given to them as well.

Therefore, we do not follow only the letter of the law but also the spirit of the law. As those redeemed by Christ and washed clean from the stain of sin, we are called to help our neighbor improve and protect his possessions and income. We should be willing to use the gifts, money, and possessions that God has given us in this life (not only to meet our own bodily needs) but to generously help our neighbors as a way of serving them in the service of Christ.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, You are a giver of all good gifts and have blessed me abundantly in this life. Thank you for caring for me and providing people in my life to help me to improve and protect the gifts You've given. Forgive me for those times when I have selfishly neglected to serve my neighbor and have been dishonest in my gain of worldly possessions. Help me to love and serve my neighbor the way that You love and serve Your creation. Amen.

Friday of the First Week in Lent

FEBRUARY 27, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 5:1-20

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 13:1-18; Genesis 14:1-24; Mark 5:1-20

"And crying out with a loud voice, he said, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?'" (Mark 5:7a)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"Jesus is my homeboy." Have you ever heard anyone say something like that? Yes, Jesus took on human flesh, but does that make Him a fun-loving buddy you'd like to hang out with at the roller rink on Friday night? (That's still a thing, right?)

Did the legion of demons that possessed the man in the country of the Gerasenes think that Jesus was a joke? Notice that the demons didn't come up to Jesus and try to dab him up or try to engage Him in casual conversation. When the man saw Jesus, he ran to Him, fell before him in fear, and cried out, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" Their knowledge of who Jesus is and their recognition of the power and authority He held over them was evident in their posture and pleading. Do we approach Jesus in the same way?

Like those demons, we ought to recognize His power and authority over us. Unlike those demons, Christ is our Savior and has invited us into His presence through worship, through the study of His Word, and through our reception of the Lord's Supper. This should help you to understand why Lutherans take worship so seriously.

In worship, God has promised to spare us from judgment. When we say things, "Lord, have mercy upon us," we know that He does because of Christ's sacrifice and service to us. Unlike the demons, who stand condemned, we've been redeemed. Christ assures us of our place in His kingdom through His sacrificial death and resurrection. Additionally, in our worship, we should not act as if Jesus is anything less than God in the flesh who comes into our presence to bring us the fruits of His salvation.

Jesus is not inaccessible to us. He has come near to save us. Once he was healed, the demon-possessed man longed to be with Jesus, but Jesus told him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." That same admonition can be given to each one of us. We live in a world that needs to hear the Good News about Christ. So what does the world need? Another buddy? A real fun guy to go bowling with? Or does the world need a Savior - God in the flesh who has power over sin, death, and Hell and has mercy on you?

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Before You, Lord, we bow, Our God who reigns above And rules the world below, Boundless in pow'r and love. Our thanks we bring In joy and praise, Our hearts we raise To You, our King! (LSB 966:1)

Saturday of the First Week in Lent

FEBRUARY 28, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Lent 2 - Psalm 25:1-2a, 7-8, 11; antiphon: Psalm 25:6, 2b, 22

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 15:1-21; Mark 5:21-43

*"Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!"
(Psalm 25:7)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Did you know that a person's brain doesn't fully develop until about the age of twenty-five? David must have known this as well, and that's why he asks God not to remember the sins of his youth. People often hold the opinion that youth should not dwell on their failures but instead view their mistakes as opportunities to learn, adapt, and improve. While there may be some element of truth to that idea, some people are willing to excuse and overlook foolish and sinful behavior under the pretense of youthful ignorance. Does that mean God is willing to do the same? After all, God can't expect us to make good decisions all of the time, especially while we are young and still learning to navigate through life.

If all of this is true, at what point can a person expect to outgrow this phase of life and begin taking responsibility for oneself? In actuality, the problem was never so simple. It's not a rite of passage that we'll simply outgrow. Our Lutheran Confessions state "that since the fall of Adam, all who are naturally born are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin . . ."

And that never changes! The Old Adam, our old self or that old man in us, will never change. It will never get any better. It will never produce works that are pleasing to our Creator and Almighty God. And it will never be inclined to do good! We shouldn't think of the Christian life as a process of chipping away at the Old Adam until finally, someday, we'll be completely free from its evil influence. The sinful nature needs to be dealt with much more forcefully than that. It needs to be put to death, it needs to be drowned in the waters of Holy Baptism, and a New Man in Christ needs to be given life!

This is what the loving and merciful God has done for you. He has come to you in Baptism and united you with His Son, the Savior. And because of this, God no longer sees your sin; it was crucified and buried with Christ. Now your sins (all of them, not just the ones of your youth) are forgiven. You are washed clean in the blood of Christ. You are a New Man in Christ.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus, refuge of the weary, Blest Redeemer, whom we love, Fountain in life's desert dreary, Savior from the world above: Often have Your eyes, offended, Gazed upon the sinner's fall; Yet upon the cross extended, You have borne the pain of all. (LSB 423:1)

Second Sunday in Lent, Reminiscere

MARCH 1, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 15:21-28

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 16:1-9, 15-17:22; Mark 6:1-13

"And [Jesus] answered, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.'" (Matthew 15:26)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus calls her what?!? A dog! What many Jews labeled the Canaanites! Looks like a roadblock! A wall! This mommy doesn't slink away, though, with her tail between her legs. Not defeated. What appears to be a pure "NO", she hears as a "NO" that has a "YES" inside. A hidden "YES"! "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." (Matthew 15:27) "Ain't nothing but a hound dog!" Fine with her because even the dogs are family! Canaanites are part of Jesus' family tree. Rahab! Tamar! Ruth! Jew AND Gentile included in Jesus' Salvation Mission from day one! She believes that. Jesus is for her, even when everything says otherwise. She won't let Him go until she's proven right. And she is! She goes on her journey back home with His "for you" Word in her pocket! "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." (Matthew 15:28) Jesus doesn't disappoint! Brings her beyond the wall, and she returns home not the same. Stretched! Surprised! Severed! Jesus stretched her to the breaking point, so she finds help and hope in Him alone. Jesus surprised her with growth, enlarging her heart to wait on Him alone. Jesus severed her from all attachments and allegiances that she feared, loved, and trusted, so He became her God and Lord alone! She expects walls ahead, but she can trust Jesus at every wall. He'll bring her through.

We'll have those moments where it's like we're on the autobahn of faith—cruising along and making the lights. Getting to our destinations. Sure, a few hiccups, but nothing horrible. Then one day, we slam the brakes. We only see red. Stopped! Stuck! What a standstill! All our plans thrown out the window. A wall before us. Can't get around it, over it, under it. What a wall! The wall comes in many shapes and sizes. Parents separate! Betrayed by friends! Shattered dreams! Failed a class! Cut from the team! A beloved family member dies! When we run up against the wall, we're confused. "Jesus loves me this I know!" Really? Jesus doesn't seem warm and friendly. No matter the wall, though, we cling to Jesus like this mommy. We trust Him at the wall. After all, on the Cross, He confronted all the walls we could ever run up against. And on Easter, He walked out of the Grave. Alive and well! The way through has been paved and paid! The journey of faith has begun, and Jesus will bring us through every wall. Not the same either. And certainly not alone. We're surrounded by one another. And Jesus leads the way.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Through long grief-darkened days help us, dear Lord, To trust Your grace for courage to endure, To rest our souls in Your supporting love, And find our hope within Your mercy sure. (LSB 764:5)

Monday of the Second Week in Lent

MARCH 2, 2026

Today's Reading: Genesis 32:22-32

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 18:1-15; Genesis 18:16-20:18; Mark 6:14-34

"Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day has broken.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.'" (Genesis 32:26)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What a wrestling match in Genesis 32! Not the one we would expect. Wasn't the Lord on Jacob's side? Yes, but here it appeared that the Lord was Jacob's adversary. Not exactly what Jacob probably wanted. I mean, his life was already in deadly danger. Why? Well, you may remember when Jacob cut a deal with Esau, his older brother. Esau's birthright for a bowl of vegetable stew. And then, Jacob deceived his dad to get Esau's blessing. Not a happy camper! Filled with rage, Esau threatened to murder his baby brother. A family feud was in process. Jacob didn't want it to escalate to bloodshed! He desired his family to be safe and sound, so he made plans that could possibly cool off Esau's jets. Jacob prayed to the Lord and then sent his family ahead to Esau with loads of goodies.

Jacob, now alone, found himself wrestling all night. No match against a mere man but against the Lord Himself! Throughout the struggle, Jacob had quite the grip. The Lord even touched his hip and put it out of socket, but Jacob refused to tap out. At daybreak, the Lord said, "Let go!" "Not until you bless me," Jacob yelled! The Lord came through for Jacob as He promised! He gave Jacob the new name "Israel," which means "he who wrestles with God." And then, the Lord blessed him. Jacob called the place "Penuel," which refers to seeing the Lord's face. This wrestler wouldn't share his name even though Jacob wanted that. The name would be shared, though, many years later, by the angel Gabriel with the virgin Mary and her guardian Joseph. Yes, the One that Jacob wrestled with was the One that would come from Jacob's family tree and take down Sin, Death, and Satan for you and me.

We can feel like we're in a wrestling match with the Lord. It can look like God is against us as we get bumps and bruises from the rough and tumble of life. Some days we just limp along. Suffering and sickness tucker us out. Temptations wear us down. Even though it can seem like we're all alone, we're not! Jacob is an example for us. Hold onto the Lord's promises day after day until we see him face-to-face in the resurrection. We will! All of God's promises have their "yes" in Jesus! No promise will ever be broken by the One who has broken the powers of Sin, Death, and Satan by His wrestling match at Golgotha for us. Because Jesus has conquered, we will, too! It's His promise, and His grip on us won't slip.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Jesus, lead Thou on Till our rest is won; And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless, Guide us by Thy hand To our fatherland. (LSB
718:1)*

Tuesday of the Second Week in Lent

MARCH 3, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7 or Romans 5:1-5

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 21:1-21; Mark 6:35-56

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Through! What a tiny preposition, but that preposition is Good News for you! Paul states that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1b) Peace with God is not through our brains and brawn, our achievements and accomplishments, our degrees and pedigrees, likes and looks. Peace with God is not even through how good we are as Lutherans or how good we have Luther's Small Catechism memorized. Although it's not a bad idea to store those words in your heart. Peace with God is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Period. No one or nothing else. The Jesus who lived the perfect life we couldn't live. The Jesus who died the godforsaken death we deserved to die. The Jesus who was raised for our justification. Yes, you are justified—declared enough—all for Jesus' sake! This is Good News that's out of this World for everyone in this World! We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

There's more! Always more with the Good News! It's no trickle of Good News but an endless gushing fountain! Paul tells us that "through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand." (Romans 5:2a) His grace and not our grit got us into God's House! What undeserved kindness and favor from God our heavenly Father! You need not doubt what God thinks of you. By faith in Jesus, you stand in God's House as His beloved Child. Your Baptism assures you of this. Paul encourages us to remain in the Father's House, a house that has grace as the floor, ceiling, and walls. In this grace place, "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:2b) We look forward to our glorious resurrection on the Last Day when everything wrong will be made right, beautiful, true, and good!

As we wait with Holy Spirit-ed confidence for the great-and-glorious Last Day, there will be pressures. You've felt them before, haven't you? Paul tells us that we get to rejoice in the pressures of life because they produce endurance, that is, a hunger and thirst for God's grace to sustain and shelter us 24/7. And endurance produces character, that is, we don't despair over the pressures, but depend on God, who is leading us by the hand through the pressures into Paradise. And character produces hope; that is, no matter what our eyes see, we know we will outlast the pressures, all because of that little preposition "though"! Through our Lord Jesus Christ! Yes, through Jesus, we have peace with God today, tomorrow, and forevermore!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

In God, my faithful God, I trust when dark my road; Great woes may overtake me, Yet He will not forsake me. My troubles He can alter; His hand lets nothing falter. (LSB 745:1)

Wednesday of the Second Week in Lent

MARCH 4, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 7:1-23

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 22:1-19; Mark 7:1-23

"And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him.'" (Mark 7:20)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The topic of food can get complicated these days with all of the diets out there: keto, carnivore, Mediterranean, vegetarian, gluten-free, etc. In Jesus' day, food was a controversial topic. Lines were drawn in the sand. No ifs, ands, or buts about it. There was a food fight going on, so to speak. Certain foods were deemed "clean" and therefore okay to consume, while other foods were considered defiled and dirtied, leaving a person ritually unclean and unable to worship at the Temple. Jesus stops the food fight when He says, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." (Mark 7:14b-15) The disciples have a tough time with this. It's not what their Jewish mothers taught them. They would've been well aware of the clean/unclean categories. Jesus rocks their world when He tells them that food can't defile anyone. Every bite passes the heart and is expelled. Jesus declares all foods clean! So then what makes a person defiled and dirty?

Food isn't the real problem since the heart of the problem is the human heart! And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." (Mark 7:20-23) No one gets away guilt-free from that list! Ouch! Leaves us all realizing that we have had thoughts, words, and actions that defile and dirty us. We're all in the same boat. We confess together, "I, a poor, miserable sinner!" Dirty and defiled, we deserve damnation!

Thanks be to God, we get what we don't deserve! Grace upon grace! Jesus is the One who defiles and dirties Himself! He touches the unclean leper, lifts up the unclean dead, eats and drinks with unclean sinners and tax collectors. He takes upon Himself the dirt and defilement that damns! He bears our sins to die our death! Yes, He cries out those words of abandonment that we'll never have to speak: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). The Temple curtain is torn from top to bottom. The way to the Father is open to all through that godforsaken death on Good Friday. His blood cleanses us from all sin. "Take, drink, this is My blood shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins." There is food that sprinkles our hearts clean. Take, drink!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Mine is the sin, but Thine the righteousness; Mine is the guilt, but Thine the cleansing blood; Here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace: Thy blood, Thy righteousness, O Lord my God. (LSB 631:5)

Thursday of the Second Week in Lent

MARCH 5, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Eighth Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 24:1-31; Mark 7:24-37

"We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way." (Luther's meaning for the Eighth Commandment)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The Eighth Commandment! Thanks be to God for this commandment and Luther's explanation! After all, the tongue can be so destructive. It's teeny-tiny and yet can go scorched earth on a person's life, as James reminds us: "So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell." (James 3:5-6) Every one of us has had those moments when we stayed silent as gossip was shared, when we were delighted to share the faults and failures of others, when we embellished a story to make ourselves look better, or when we lied about someone to turn people against them. We have used our tongues as a wrecking ball. Reputations turned into rubble. Friendships fractured. Relationships ruined.

Repent! All of us! Return to the Lord, for He is gracious and merciful! Go to His called and ordained man who uses his tongue to speak that passion-purchased pardon into our ears! "You are forgiven all for Jesus' sake!" Those words cover all the bad our tongues have done. What Good News that Christ only speaks well of you and me! Forgives us all sins! Defends us from every accusation from Slithery Serpent Satan! Yes, Jesus is no adversary like Satan but our Advocate! Before the Father, He continually pleads for us, showing the Father the very wounds that won peace! Peace with God! Peace with one another!

Having been forgiven, we now strive to live at peace with all. Yes, our tongues have been set free to defend our neighbor, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way. We now have the joy of imitating Jesus, who is our Advocate. Keep your eyes open every day for those opportunities to be an advocate to and for your neighbor. And when you sin with your tongue, what joy to hear once again Christ's forgiveness from the lips of your pastor.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"Bear no false witness nor defame Your neighbor nor destroy his name, But view him in the kindest way; Speak truth in all that you say." Have mercy, Lord! (LSB 581:9)

Friday of the Second Week in Lent

MARCH 6, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 8:1-21

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 24:32-52, 61-67; Genesis 25:1-26:35; Mark 8:1-21

"And his disciples answered him, 'How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?'" (Mark 8:4)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

We can be so forgetful when it comes to our Lord's compassion towards us, can't we? We're not alone! What good company we have with the disciples! They got forgetful, too. Only two chapters earlier, the Lord fed five thousand men plus women and children using five loaves and two fish. Now in Mark 8, the disciples are faced with four thousand growling stomachs. No McDonald's or Applebee's in sight! Whatever shall they do? Jesus gives them the situation. "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away." And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?" (Mark 8:2-4) They were looking at the One who could and would feed these folks, but they got tripped up by the bigness of their need and fear.

We, like the disciples, so often look at the bigness of our needs and fears and forget that there's One who is bigger than our needs and fears! That One is Jesus, of course. Let's fix our eyes on Him. His generosity knows no bounds! His compassion is for all! For you! For me! Compassion for Jesus is not just a feeling! Whenever Jesus has compassion in His Ministry, He does! He provides! He acts! His compassion produces action. We see His compassion for a scared-and-scarred World when He died for it. He gave everything He had on the Cross for you and me—every drop of blood to have us as His own. We belong to Him. Baptized in His Name, we lack nothing! More forgiveness than sin! More peace than anxiety! More life than death!

Because Jesus has taken care of our biggie-salvation-needs, He'll take care of our smaller, everyday needs as well. We're reminded of this every time we eat and drink His Body and Blood. The Lord's Supper fixes our eyes on the One who is compassionate towards us, feeding us food that fills us with His unending life. With the Lord, we lack nothing here in time and there in eternity. He will provide what we need for this body and life. Compassion is who He is and what He does for you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

I am trusting Thee to guide me; Thou alone shalt lead, Ev'ry day and hour supplying All my need. (LSB 729:4)

Saturday of the Second Week in Lent

MARCH 7, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Lent 3 - Psalm 25:1-2, 17-18, 20; antiphon: Psalm 25:15-16

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 27:1-29; Mark 8:22-38

"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul." (Psalm 25:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, to You I lift up my soul. I trust in You. Yes, my life rests on You, for You are the unshakable foundation. That's what my Baptism tells me. I have been put into You, my Mighty Fortress. Sin, Death, and Satan can't crush and hush me for You have overcome these enemies by Your bleeding, dying, third-day rising. I believe this, O Lord, and yet I struggle. There are days I look around and my eyes get the best of me. It can look like Sin, Death, and Satan are in charge. O Lord, I know this is not true. You are Lord over all! Therefore, help me to walk by faith and not by sight. Open the eyes of my heart to see You as my deliverer. I'm helpless to save myself, after all, but I am not hopeless. You are my hope. This is not wishful thinking but a sure confidence that You will come through for me in Your way and Your time.

I feel alone some days, but Your promise is that You are with me always. Your promises can't fail. They will never lead me astray. You tell the truth, for You are the Truth. There's no reason, therefore, for me to ignore what I'm going through or try to cover it up with a smiley face. I can be honest since nothing can surprise You. There are troubles in my life that I can't get myself out of. Troubles that I am responsible for and those that have been brought into my life by others. These troubles teach me that I'm not in control. I ask You to consider all the sufferings and troubles I have, and please forgive me. Cover my sins with Your righteousness. Cleanse me with Your blood. Every part of my life, You have redeemed with Your blood, and I will on the Last Day get to see how You used it all for my good. I won't be able to stop smiling!

Now I wait. It's not always easy with all the pains and problems in this life. So please, Lord, guard my heart from the attacks of Satan, who wants me to give in, give up, and give out. The Cross is my reminder that You can and will deliver me from all my fears and tears. You did not stay dead but rose on Easter Morning, securing for me my own Easter Morning on the Last Day! Because You are my refuge, I can't be shaken. Nothing and no one can destroy me. I trust in You and will not be put to shame. O Lord, to You I lift up my soul.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

While I am a pilgrim here, Let Thy love my spirit cheer; As my guide, my guard, my friend, Lead me to my journey's end. (LSB 779:5)

Third Sunday in Lent, Oculi

MARCH 8, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 11:14-28

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 27:30-45; 28:10-22; Mark 9:1-13

"As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!' But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Luke 11:27-28)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What does it mean to "keep" God's Word? Indeed, there is some element of observing or obeying it. God knows what is actually good and bad for us, so when we follow God's Word, things go better for us. Things usually go better when we obey our parents than when we disobey them. If you can keep from stealing, you won't have as many troubles with the law. If you lead a chaste and decent life, your marriage will likely be smoother. If you can go without coveting, you'll be happier. Being content and happy with what God has given us is a blessing!

But that's not all that it means to "keep" God's Word. Keeping it also involves guarding it and treasuring it. We guard and treasure things that are important to us. You don't want to lose your house keys or your wallet, so you keep them in a spot where you won't forget them as easily. You don't want to lose your passwords, so you choose something you can remember. You only have a certain number of hours in a day, so you guard your time to ensure you can accomplish what you would like to get done.

In the same way, Jesus instructs us to guard God's Word. We should treasure it. We should place it in areas where we won't forget about it, such as near our beds or on the home screens of our phones. We should learn it by heart so that it's with us wherever we go. We should make sure to keep certain times of our day and week free for it, such as Sunday mornings for the Divine Service, a weekly time for Bible Study, and a daily time for devotions.

Are we blessed because we do these things? Well, yes and no. We aren't blessed because we have somehow proved to God how faithful we are; We are blessed because that Word that we treasure is full of the promises of Jesus for you. That Word IS Jesus.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Monday of the Third Week in Lent

MARCH 9, 2026

Today's Reading: Exodus 8:16-24 or Jeremiah 26:1-15

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 29:1-30; Genesis 29:31-34:31; Mark 9:14-32

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me. Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people, and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. Thus I will put a division between my people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall happen.'"
(Exodus 8:20-23)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The plagues were impressive in and of themselves. Destruction in various forms came upon the land of the Egyptians, and Moses let them know it would all happen before it did. That should have been enough. However, on top of that, God spared His Children from destruction. God "set apart" a specific area and said it would be safe, and it was. What did God have to do to protect them? Was it some great wall that He would have the people build? Was there a special prayer they needed to pray?

No. God simply spoke His Word, and it was so. No flies would enter the land of Goshen. God was in command. He had all authority in heaven and on earth, so the flies did what He wanted. God uses His authority to "set apart" His people and to protect them.

Long after this, Jesus took His disciples up to a mountain and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

And then, long after that, a Pastor took you in his arms and did just what Jesus said to do. You were baptized, set apart, through water and the Word of Jesus. The Lord who commands all things with His Word spoke His Word upon you and made you His child, setting you apart. His Word now, just as then, makes it so.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

God's own child, I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ! He because I could not pay it, Gave my full redemption price. Do I need earth's treasures many? I have one worth more than any That brought me salvation free Lasting to eternity! (LSB 594:1)

Tuesday of the Third Week in Lent

MARCH 10, 2026

Today's Reading: Ephesians 5:1-9

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 35:1-29; Mark 9:33-50

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Ephesians 5:1-2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

You don't even need to look at the scientific research (although there is much!) to know that most of a child's learning comes through imitation. Infants mimic the face movements of their parents. Little sisters and brothers learn to walk by trying to move like their older siblings and to keep up with them. We sound like our parents and the people we grew up around. The accents and inflections in our speech change when we move to a different part of the country or the world.

St. Paul tells us that as children of God, we should be imitators of Jesus. We should "walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us." What is the best way to learn how to do that? Watch Jesus! Listen to Jesus! What do we see? We see someone who is kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving!

To understand Ephesians 5:1, we need to consider what comes immediately before (the word 'therefore' is a hint for us to do just that!). "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Keep Jesus' life, words, and teachings always in mind. Pay attention as we walk through the Church Year, seeing Jesus honor His parents as He grows, love His enemies as they ridicule Him, find time for the weak and helpless as He cares for them, and give Himself up to death for the whole world.

The people we listen to and watch have an impact on us. The company we keep will influence us. So, be careful about who you watch and who you listen to. Listen first to God in His Word; listen to your pastors as they preach Christ crucified for you; surround yourself with godly men and women to imitate in their lives; lean on good friends who will speak truth to you.

If you want to be more kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving, watch and listen to those who have these qualities. What will you find yourself doing if these are the things you listen to and watch? You'll find yourself imitating them in your own life.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Grant us grace to see Thee, Lord, Present in Thy holy Word-Grace to imitate Thee now And be pure, as pure art Thou; That we might become like Thee At Thy great epiphany And may praise Thee, ever blest, God in man made manifest. (LSB 394:5)

Wednesday of the Third Week in Lent

MARCH 11, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 10:1-12

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 37:1-36; Mark 10:1-12

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."
(Mark 10:7-9)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What is your favorite thing to see at a wedding? Is it seeing the Bride in her dress? Seeing friends and family coming together to support a bride and groom? Is it the dancing or the meal after the ceremony? Is it looking at the decorations or everyone all dressed up nice? Those are all nice, but they aren't my favorite. What I like to see at the wedding is the groom's face when the bride first comes into view. Gone from the face are the forced smiles of greeting, the nervous stress, and everything else. Instead? It's simple, pure joy. Everyone else thinks the bride is beautiful, but the groom sees her differently than everyone else. Yes, he thinks she is beautiful, but his gaze is not just one of admiration; it's one of pure love and happiness. He sees no imperfection. He sees his bride. He sees the one that God is uniting him with "in heart, mind, and body."

Why is that my favorite? Because it reminds me of the way that Jesus views us; it's the way He sees His Bride, the Church. He sees us as perfect, beautiful, and holy. There is a difference between a regular groom and Jesus, though. In a regular wedding, it is the Bride who prepares herself for the big day. She gets her hair done, does her makeup, and gets dressed to walk down the aisle as perfectly as possible. But in our marriage to Jesus? He's the one who makes us perfect.

Yes, we are full of imperfections. We have sins, and shame, and grief that weigh us down. But Jesus sees us with the eyes of a Bridegroom. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27)

The next time you are at a wedding, while you watch the bride walk down the aisle, make sure to steal a glance at the groom and see his joy. Let it remind you of the way Jesus sees you with perfect love and joy in His face.

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)

Thursday of the Third Week in Lent

MARCH 12, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Ninth Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 39:1-23; Mark 10:13-31

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it." (Small Catechism: Ninth Commandment and Meaning)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Coveting is dangerous. Jesus warns us against it when He says, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15). He tells this to the crowd around Him when two brothers are arguing over an inheritance. These brothers were on the verge of ruining their relationship over possessions. Sadly, this happens in families all too often.

Why does Jesus warn us against this? Because when we covet, we set up a false idol that we think will make us whole and give us what we need. St. Paul makes this clear when he writes, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5) When we want what God has not given to us we show that we do not "fear, love, and trust in God above all things" and that we have broken the First Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me."

How do you know you are coveting? One way to diagnose coveting in your life is to consider whether you are happy when your neighbor is sad or sad when your neighbor is happy. There's a word for being sad about others' happiness. It's one you probably know well: envy. There's also a word for being happy about someone else's sadness. It's a German word that literally means "damage-joy": schadenfreude. Sadly, we have these feelings way too often. It's okay to be disappointed that you didn't ace the test; it's evil when you delight in the fact that someone else fails. It's okay to be happy that you made the team; it's evil when you are sad that someone else made it. Envy and schadenfreude invade our lives.

Why is this bad? Because when we covet, we are telling God that we don't have enough. When we covet, we are telling God that He hasn't given us what we need. Coveting destroys our thankfulness and our contentment. What's the remedy? St. Paul tells us to look at the cross: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). God has given you exactly what you need; the proof is there at the cross.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"You shall not crave your neighbor's house Nor covet money, goods, or spouse. Pray God He would your neighbor bless As you yourself wish success." Have mercy, Lord! (LSB 581:10)

Friday of the Third Week in Lent

MARCH 13, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 10:32-52

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 40:1-23; Mark 10:32-52

"And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.'" (Mark 10:35-38)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Be careful what you pray for. The Bible is full of examples of God giving people what they keep asking for, even when He has told them not to ask. The people in the wilderness grumble against God, and they don't want to enter the Promised Land because they are fearful of the people who are there. They say, "It would be better for us to die in the wilderness!" And God granted their prayer. They would wander for 40 years, and when their generation had passed away, it would be their children who would enter the Promised Land.

God's people wanted and begged for a king. God told them He was their King. He told them that if they had a king, the king would tax them, take their goods, and send their children off to war. They kept begging. God eventually gave them what they asked for, and the kings taxed them, took their goods, and sent their children off to war.

James and John go up to Jesus and say, "Lord, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." That's bold! What's bolder is what they ask, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." They didn't know what they were asking for. Jesus' glory is when He is lifted up on the cross! Do they really want to be there? In His mercy, Jesus did not grant them that prayer.

But, do you know what was there with Jesus in His glory? All of the sins of James, John, the people of Israel, and even you. If you are going to pray, pray for what the Lord has promised to give you. We don't know what we should pray for. That shouldn't stop us from praying, but it should change the way we pray. Instead of making demands, pray "Thy will be done," and remember "God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die." (3rd Petition, Lord's Prayer)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Your gracious will on earth be done As it is done before Your throne, That patiently we may obey Throughout our lives all that You say. Curb flesh and blood and ev'ry ill That sets itself against Your will. (LSB 766:4)

Saturday of the Third Week in Lent

MARCH 14, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Lent 4 - Psalm 122:1-2, 6, 8; antiphon: Isaiah 66:10a, 11a

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 41:1-27; Mark 11:1-19

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD!'"
(Psalm 122:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Guess what you get to do tomorrow? You get to go to church!

When I was younger, I'd ask my dad, "Do we have to go to church?" He'd always answer the same way: "No, but you get to go to church." Do we have to go? Well, I suppose you don't. But why wouldn't you want to? You get to go to God's House and receive His Gifts.

You get to go and confess your sins and have a pastor stand "in the stead and by the command" of Jesus Christ to absolve you! You get to join other believers as you sing the Kyrie, confess the Creed, and pray the Lord's Prayer. You get to sit, rest, and listen to your pastor preach a sermon that he wrote specifically for you and your congregation. You get to receive the very body and blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! You get to have the Lord's name placed upon you in the Benediction as you are sent back out into the world!

Where else would you rather be? Sleeping in bed? Fishing? Playing soccer? Those are all nice, but they won't give you what you receive at church. You can do those things at other times. The joy you get from those things is only temporary. The joy and peace that you get at church? That's eternal. It's something that the world cannot give.

Not only do you receive the Gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation, but at church, you get the gift of family and friends of all ages. Look around and see the people that Jesus has brought into your church. Some are old, some are young. Some have been members of your church their whole life, and others have just moved into town. Whoever they are, God has brought them to you and you to them. Take the time to get to know them and treasure the moments you have together.

So, the next time someone tells you it's "time to go to church," join with King David and countless others who have prayed the words of Psalm 122: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD!'" You don't have to; you get to.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

This day, God's people meeting, His Holy Scripture hear; His living presence greeting, Through bread and wine made near. We journey on, believing, Renewed with heav'nly might, From grace more grace receiving, On this blest day of light. (LSB 906:3)

Fourth Sunday in Lent, Laetare

MARCH 15, 2026

Today's Reading: John 6:1-15

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 41:28-57; Mark 11:20-33

*"Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted."
(John 6:11)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

I wish I had been there. Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. How great is that? The people there that day thought so. They all ate—all they wanted. Jesus was healing the sick and feeding the hungry. They recognized a prophet when they saw one. They wanted to make Him king. By force, if necessary.

But force would not be necessary. Jesus is their king. Just not the kind of king they were thinking of. What Jesus did was pretty great, and they didn't want it to stop! But Jesus had come to do something even greater. He came to lay down His life for them. To heal them from their sin. To give them life not just here and now for a while, but eternal life. And to feed them not with bread and fish, but with His own Body and Blood.

That's what we've been focused on this Lenten season. That Jesus has come to lay down His life for us, to give us life. John tells us Jesus knew what He was going to do when He asked Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" Jesus was not making it up as He went! He had only one purpose for His coming, and His feeding of the multitude that day was a foreshadowing of the even greater feeding He had come to do—to feed all people of all times and places with the Bread of Life. With Himself.

So just as He did that day, we will soon hear again how Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and gave it to His disciples. But this time, He would say, Do this - keep doing this - in remembrance of Me. And they would. From that day on and to this day, the disciples and the pastors who have come after them feed us with the bread from heaven, the food that gives eternal life in the forgiveness of our sins, the Body and Blood of Jesus.

So, while I wish I had been there that day, I then remember that I am! I am every Sunday, as Jesus feeds me through His servant, my Pastor. I have all I need.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Monday of the Fourth Week in Lent

MARCH 16, 2026

Today's Reading: Exodus 16:2-21 or Isaiah 49:8-13

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 42:1-34, 38; Mark 12:1-12

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you.'" (Exodus 16:4)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

It was supposed to be great. They were no longer slaves. God had brought them out of Egypt with His mighty arm, ten plagues, and by dividing the waters of the Red Sea. They were on their way to a better life.

Except . . . they were out of food. It had been two and a half months since they left Egypt. Now suddenly the future didn't look so good. Slavery in Egypt was bad, but at least they had food to eat. They wished they had never left. So they grumbled against Moses and Aaron, but they were really grumbling against the Lord.

But just as we heard yesterday, that Jesus knew how He would feed the 5,000 people, so here too, God knew how He would feed Israel. He wasn't going to let His people starve. He wasn't going to leave them on their own after bringing them out of Egypt! He knew. Even when, instead of trusting, they grumbled in doubt and unbelief. I am about to rain bread from heaven for you. Long before Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer to pray, give us this day our daily bread, God was doing just that. It's what God does, just often in ways we don't expect. When He rained down bread from heaven, the people looked at it and said, "What is it?" which in Hebrew is *man hu?* That's why we call it manna.

You are no less valuable and important to God than the people of Israel. He made you His child when He brought you through the water of Baptism. And He will provide for you, too, and often in ways you don't expect. Like a cross! There, God provides life through death and forgiveness through condemnation. The disciples didn't understand that at the time, but would later. So when people looked at the cross and asked *man hu?* the disciples would say, your Savior!

Lent teaches us to fix our eyes on Jesus. That when life is tough and not turning out as we thought, we know that the one who gave His only-begotten Son for us will provide everything else we need as well. Even in *man hu* ways!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week in Lent

MARCH 17, 2026

Today's Reading: Galatians 4:21-31 or Acts 2:41-47

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 43:1-28; Mark 12:13-27

*"So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman."
(Galatians 4:31)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Abraham had two wives, Hagar and Sarah. Sarah was his first wife. And to Abraham and Sarah, God promised a son. Though they were old and past the age people usually have children, God promised. And they believed God. But as the years went by and still no son, they wavered. After all, God had promised Abraham a son, not Sarah. So they took matters into their own hands, and Abraham had a son by Hagar, Sarah's maidservant.

But that was not God's plan! So, after many more years had passed, and Abraham and Sarah were even older, and it was even more impossible for them to have children, God came and said, "Now." And God did something only God could do: He gave 100-year-old Abraham and 90-year-old Sarah a son—the son of the promise, Isaac.

Paul uses these two women as examples. There is the world's way of doing things, and there is God's way. In the world, we are under the Law and live according to the Law. Under the Law, it's all on you. You have to do it. You have to make things right. That's how it is with school. You have to do your assignments. You have to earn your grades. It's all on you.

But in the kingdom of God, things are different. In God's kingdom, we live under grace, under His words and promises. Under grace, it's not all on you; it's all on Him. God does it. He makes things right. That's what Jesus did. He was born of woman, born under the Law, to do what we could never do and to make what we made wrong, right. And He did that through His perfect life and His death on the cross.

That's the message Paul preached to the Galatians, and they were born from above as children of God, children of God's promised forgiveness and love. But they were also being told by others that that wasn't good enough—they had to do more. To that, Paul said no! When God makes a promise, as He did to Abraham, He will keep it.

And that's true for us children of God's promise as well, children of God through the water and word of Baptism. You did nothing there, that's all Jesus for you. And what Jesus started by grace, He will complete by grace. Jesus has set you free to live in love and joy and peace.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless; My soul, believe and doubt it not. Why stagger at this word of promise? Has Scripture ever falsehood taught? No! Then this word must true remain: By grace you too will life obtain. Amen. (LSB 566:1)

Wednesday of the Fourth Week in Lent

MARCH 18, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 12:28-44

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 44:1-18, 32-34; Mark 12:28-44

"She out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:44b)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

When you think of role models, poor widows are not the first thing that pops into your mind. Maybe a teacher, someone who goes out of their way to help others, or someone who leads in the face of danger. In Jesus' day, the scribes would be the kind of people you looked up to. Yet Jesus says to beware of them. They are not good role models. Because while they looked good, did all the right things, and knew all the right answers, it was all a show. Their hearts weren't in it. They prayed long prayers with their lips but not their hearts. The widows they should have helped, they instead devoured. Sometimes we do that, too. Outwardly, we look good, but our hearts are filled with sin.

But Jesus points to this widow. Maybe they hadn't even noticed her. She didn't look like much. But inside was the most beautiful faith! Faith that took her last two coins, all she had to live on, and gave them to God. Had she not gone to the Temple that day, no one would have missed her or her offering. But it mattered to her. So she went. And she gave. And she mattered to Jesus.

As do you. That's why Jesus gave all He had for you. Not just giving all He had to live on, but His very life itself. And He gave not only more than anyone else, but more than everyone else put together, and what no one else could give—a perfectly sinless life to atone for all the completely sinful lives of the world. And while just one life for the countless lives that have lived since the creation of the world may seem as small and insignificant as the offering of the widow, the two small coins that make just a penny, like the offering of the widow, that one life was more than all other offerings. For it was given in the most beautiful faith and love. With perfect faith in His Father, and with perfect love for you.

And now, Jesus gives you two little things—a little piece of bread and a little sip of wine, that don't look like much to the eye, but nothing could be bigger. There is Jesus' Body and Blood. There is Jesus and His forgiveness and all His Gifts. All you need to live eternally.

So if you're looking for a role model, here's one for you! No one may notice you, and what you do may not seem to matter. But you matter to Jesus. You are precious to Him.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus, thank You for giving all You are for me. Help me live in faith like this widow, knowing that You give me all I need to live on. Amen.

St. Joseph, Guardian of Jesus

MARCH 19, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 45:1-20, 24-28; Mark 13:1-23

"So that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled." (Matthew 2:23)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

This was the second time *an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream*. The first was after Joseph discovered that his betrothed, Mary, was having a child that was not his. He resolved to divorce her quietly until the angel explained that Mary had *not* been unfaithful to him, but faithful to both him and God. And Joseph did what the angel commanded him, though it wasn't easy.

Then, after Jesus had been born, an angel of the Lord came again. The child's life is in danger. Take the child and your wife and flee to Egypt. For how long? A few weeks? Months? Years? Until I tell you. And Joseph did what the angel commanded him, though it wasn't easy.

Then, when King Herod was dead, the angel returned one more time to tell Joseph to go back home. Once again, Joseph uprooted his life and family and did what the angel commanded him, though it wasn't easy. St. Joseph, Guardian of Jesus.

But he is not *Saint* Joseph because of all he did as Jesus' guardian and all the ways he kept the word of the Lord spoken by the angel, though it wasn't easy. We admire him for that. I know I've failed to do many things God has told me to do that are far less difficult than all that! But he is Saint Joseph not because of all he did for this child, but because of all this child did for him. Before Joseph began looking after Jesus, the Son of God was looking after him. Before Joseph left his home, the Son of God had left his. And though Joseph gave up much for this son, the Son of God gave up much more for him when He laid down His life on the cross for Joseph. To make him - and us - saints by grace through faith.

So perhaps we could say of Joseph and Jesus, not *like father, like son*, but the opposite: *like son, like father!* What Jesus did was not because of what Joseph did, but what Joseph did was because of what Jesus did. Jesus came to fulfill all the words and promises of God, the words and promises Joseph believed. And by faith alone in those words and promises of the promised Messiah, Joseph believed what he believed and did what he did. Trusting that even though it wasn't easy, it was good. It was of God. For us and for our salvation.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, from the house of Your servant David You raised up Joseph to be the guardian of Your incarnate Son and the husband of His mother, Mary. Grant us grace to follow the example of this faithful workman in heeding Your counsel and obeying Your commands; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Friday of the Fourth Week in Lent

MARCH 20, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Tenth Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 47:1-31; Genesis 48:1-49:28; Mark 13:24-37

Urge them to stay and do their duty. (Small Catechism)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

I have found it helpful when trying to understand a word or concept to try to consider its opposite. So what's the opposite of coveting? Contentment. Instead of an unhealthy obsession with what I do not have, to be content or satisfied with what I do have, with what I've been given. Such contentment is a gift. And something many people want.

A good picture of this might be of children on a playground. They are free to play, run, pretend, and have fun because Mom and Dad are there and provide all they need. That's true for us as children of God! Because we have a Father in heaven who created us and gave us life, His Son who redeemed us and forgives us, and the Holy Spirit who gives us the Gift of contentment. As a child of God, I am free to live and enjoy life!

But sadly, we don't always live that way. We listen to a culture that encourages us to want more and more, bigger and better. To not be satisfied with what you have. What happens then is that we become slaves to our desires, unhappy, and caught up in pursuing what we don't have. That's why St. Paul calls coveting idolatry (Colossians 3:5), that is, something that takes the place of God in our hearts. And with that, Paul has "closed the loop" on the Commandments that also begin with idolatry. The First Commandment teaches us that we have a God who wants to be our God and Father, and the Tenth Commandment teaches us that we have a God and Father who wants to provide everything for us and for our neighbor. I don't have to covet what God has given my neighbor because I know He has good He has planned for me and wants to give to me.

So just as I can support my neighbor in every physical need, help him to improve and protect his possessions and income, and protect his reputation, I can also urge my neighbor's wife, workers, and animals to stay and do their duty, because I know God has given them to him and will provide for me. For if God did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for me and my spiritual life, I can be sure He will also graciously give me all I need for my physical life as well (Romans 8:32). He promised!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, You have made me Your child in Baptism and made me an heir of all Your gracious promises in Christ Jesus. By Your Holy Spirit, strengthen me to forsake all covetous desires that my heart cling to You alone for all I am, all I need, and all my joy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Saturday of the Fourth Week in Lent

MARCH 21, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Lent 5 - Psalm 43:3-5; antiphon: Psalm 43:1-2a
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 49:29-50:7, 14-26; Mark 14:1-11

"Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!" (Psalm 43:3)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Tomorrow we enter Passiontide - the final two weeks of the Lenten season. The light and truth of God's Word have guided us through this season, reminding us of all that Jesus has done for us as we prepare for the joy of Easter. But before we get there, the light and truth of the Word lead us to the holy hill of Calvary—to the cross of Jesus. To see the horrible consequences of our sin, but even more, to see the incredible love of Jesus in laying down His life for us.

So, the light and truth of God's Word first show us our sin. And we confess, I am a poor, miserable sinner. I am by nature sinful and unclean. I have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by what I have done and by what I have left undone. I am not good. Without Jesus, I am dead in my trespasses and sins. That's why Lent starts with the ashes of death and ends with the cross. The wages of sin is death.

But the light and truth of God's Word doesn't leave us there, cast down in death! The ashes of death are washed off us by Baptism, and we go to the altar of God with exceeding joy, because the Body and Blood that once hung on the cross rose from death and are now given to us for forgiveness and life. Even during Lent, we do not go about mourning. No, we praise God even as we confess our sins, for by so doing we are confessing the one whose forgiveness we take refuge in. Whose resurrection won the victory over sin, death, and Hell.

So it is the light and truth of God's Word that lead us to Lent and through Lent to Easter. And it is the light and truth of God's Word that leads us through this life to the great and final Easter when Jesus comes again in glory. Until that day, Jesus defends us, delivers us, and leads us, and we take refuge in Him, praise Him, and hope in Him. For He is our salvation and our God.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*My son is love unknown, My Savior's love to me, Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be. Oh, who am I That for my sake My Lord should take frail flesh and die?
Here might I stay and sing, No story so divine!
Never was love, dear King, Never was grief like Thine. This is my friend,
In whose sweet praise I all my days Could gladly spend!
(LSB 430:1, 7)*

Fifth Sunday in Lent, Judica

MARCH 22, 2026

Today's Reading: John 8:(42-45) 46-59

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 1:1-22; Mark 14:12-31

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

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus' interaction with the "Jews who believed in him" (John 8:31) comes to a boiling point in the temple. He is accused of having a demon, and He accuses the Jews of being in league with satan, the father of lies. He calls them liars. The volley of words goes back and forth until Jesus speaks very plainly in their language regarding who He is and His relationship to Abraham. Jesus says, "...before Abraham was, I AM."

When Jesus speaks those words in John 8, he speaks of His deity and His everlasting presence. He is not merely man, but rather He is true God. He was before Abraham because He was at the beginning. He is present in their midst, and He will always be. He is from everlasting to everlasting. Two simple words, I AM, that drive His hearers to the point that they pick up stones to kill him.

As we approach the final week of Lent, we are on a journey to the cross. The cross where Jesus Christ, true God and true man, died for the sins of the world. We know what is coming in these final weeks of Lent. We will ride into Jerusalem with Christ on the donkey. We will shout Hosana and honor Him as our King by waving and laying down palm branches and cloaks. Yet as lifted up on the cross, only a handful of people are present. The rest of His loyal followers have scattered.

The Old Adam does not believe in the deity of Christ. Our sinful nature wants to pick up those stones and kill Jesus. In sin, we deny the divinity of Jesus and attribute our existence to ourselves. Our pride, our self-righteousness, stirs our hearts to see ourselves as our own god.

Christ's response to this separation is not to leave us flailing about in our own damnation. A reconciliation has taken place. As Christ is lifted up on the cross, His blood is shed for our redemption. It is not just human blood, but it is the "I AM's" blood that is poured out for His people. His side is pierced, and water and blood burst from His side. Your Baptism connects you to the cross of reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins. Your savior is more than just flesh and bones. Your savior is the "I AM."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for the 5th Sunday in Lent)

Monday of the Fifth Week in Lent

MARCH 23, 2026

Today's Reading: Genesis 22:1-14

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 2:1-22; Mark 14:32-52

"Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.'"(Genesis 22:2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Abraham is asked to make the ultimate sacrifice. He is asked to sacrifice his only son, whom he has waited years to receive. Now God says you are to sacrifice him. We know the whole narrative of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham takes Isaac and leaves for the region of Moriah. Abraham binds Isaac and is about to slaughter his son when the Lord intervenes and commands Abraham to do him no harm. Behind them is a ram caught in a thicket, which is then sacrificed instead of Isaac. Abraham names the place, "The Lord will provide." On that mountain, the Lord provided the sacrifice.

As we spend the final week of Lent reflecting on our sins and the need for those sins to be reconciled, we are drawn to a mountain. On Calvary, Christ is sacrificed for the sins of the world. Without the sacrifice, we would perish eternally. In our sinful condition, we are not merely broken; we are dead. We are cut off from God the Father. As Jesus goes to the cross, He carries the sins of the whole world to the cross. He who knew no sin became sin for us. He is the substitute for us. God the Father provides the final sacrifice for your sins. As Jesus speaks those final words, "It is finished," a declaration is made that there are no more sacrifices needed. The work of redemption is done through the blood of Christ. Abraham untied his son and sacrificed the ram that the Lord provided. The Lord nailed His son, Jesus, whom He loved and was well pleased with, to the cross that we may be set free from the bondage of sin and eternal damnation.

You are set free from eternal damnation and bound to the inheritance given to you through Christ's work of redemption. You are baptized into the name of Christ, and you are baptized into His death. If you are Baptized into His death, you are also Baptized into His resurrection. No longer can sin, satan, and the world say you are lost. You are set free in Christ!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

If my sins give me alarm And my conscience grieve me, Let Your cross my fear disarm; Peace of conscience give me. Help me see forgiveness won By Your holy passion. If for me He slays His Son, God must have compassion! (LSB 440:5)

Tuesday of the Fifth Week in Lent

MARCH 24, 2026

Today's Reading: Hebrews 9:11-15

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 2:23-3:22; Mark 14:53-72

"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come... he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption." (Hebrews 11a, 12)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The author of Hebrews presents the work of Christ through one of the threefold offices Christ fulfills—the office of the priest. The priestly role in the Old Testament provided the sacrifices for the people of God. The life of the priest revolved around the temple and pointing the people of Israel to the coming Messiah. In the sacrificial system, blood was shed, poured, and sprinkled upon the altar, upon the people, and upon the priests themselves. The work of the priest was very bloody.

As Christ fulfills the office of priest, the work is very bloody. The blood is not of male goats or bull calves, but by his very own blood. He enters into the holy place once for all. No longer do priests need to sacrifice animals. The final sacrifice is complete in Christ. Eternal redemption is secured for you.

Many churches in mainline Christianity speak of making sacrifices in order to appease God. We hear in podcasts, reels, memes, and various social media platforms the necessity to give up something so that your faithfulness can be demonstrated. We are inundated with the subtleties of self-righteousness every day. During the season of Lent, this perspective is amplified as more and more denominations diminish the work of Christ and lift up the work of man.

Today, as we bend the knee in the Divine Service to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, it is not a re-sacrifice of Christ. We participate in the resurrected Christ as His body is placed in our mouth and His blood is poured over our lips. The benefit of His sacrificial work is given to us. It is not that He is sacrificed again each time in the sacrament. He was sacrificed and now lives and reigns. The resurrected Jesus comes to you from the altar in the Sacrament of the Altar, forgiving your sins and strengthening your faith. The Holy Priest brings you the secured redemption from His shedding of blood on the cross. The sacrificial work of the priest is done.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The body of God's Lamb we eat, A priestly food and priestly meat; On sin-parched lips the chalice pours His quenching blood That life restores. (LSB 624:6)

The Annunciation of Our Lord

MARCH 25, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 4:1-18; Mark 15:1-15

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." (Luke 1:31)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Merry Christmas! We are just a few days away from Palm Sunday and Holy Week. We are concluding the 40 days of Lent, and we hear those words that are far from our thoughts and lips. Merry Christmas! It is a strange greeting indeed to hear or read. It is, of course, March 25th. We are 9 months out from the celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The words of the Christmas greeting do not roll off our tongue and lips with the same excitement as they will in 9 months. We have hesitation in those words as they are reminders of a season of joy. The end of the season of Lent tends not to be a joy-filled time. We are almost to the cross. Our reflection and meditation on our need for a savior began back at Ash Wednesday when the ashes of last year's palm branches were placed on our heads. Now, on this day, we pause to reflect on the Annunciation of our Lord. The visitation of the Angel Gabriel with Mary, the mother of our Lord.

The visitation remembered during Lent is a stark reminder of why Jesus was conceived. The incarnation of our Lord is a profound teaching regarding God the Son becoming flesh. The incarnation is important enough that it is included in all of our creeds that we confess. In the Second Article, we confess, "He was conceived by the Holy Spirit." Incarnation theology is one of the core components of our salvation. At that very moment, conception, He became man. He became human. The Son of Man and the Son of God now dwells in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary. The Holy, Holy, Holy God is human.

In His humanity, the perfect sacrifice comes into the world. True man and True God. It will be the sacrifice of human flesh for the redemption of human flesh. No other human could fulfill what was necessary for our salvation. Our deadness, our separation from God in sin, could only be restored through the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ (John 1:14). Incarnation language is foreign to the secular world this time of year. We as confessing Lutherans boldly speak of the incarnation, because in the incarnation is the final sacrifice for our sins.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, as we have known the incarnation of Your Son, Jesus Christ, by the message of the angel to the virgin Mary, so by the message of His cross and passion bring us to the glory of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for the Annunciation of our Lord)

Thursday of the Fifth Week in Lent

MARCH 26, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Close of the Commandments

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 4:19-31; Mark 15:16-32

He says: "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My Commandments." (Exodus 20:5-6) (The Close of the Commandments, Luther's Small Catechism, pg. 15)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Our God is a jealous God. It is a peculiar statement. It is a characteristic of God that does not come first to our minds. We may think of God as being loving or gracious. We may think of God as being a God of wrath and a God who delivers punishment upon those who deny his existence. A God who is jealous, though, does not readily come first to our minds. Our God is a jealous God.

He does not like to share. When the people of Israel were brought out of Egypt, they gathered at Mount Sinai. At Mount Sinai, God established His presence among His people. His words were very clear. He says, "I will be your God and you will be my people." He continues with the Ten Commandments. He admonishes His people to be Holy as He is Holy. A Holy God has Holy people.

Daily, sin, satan, and the world tempt us with false gods. We are continually drawn away from the one true God. Social status, friends, money, possessions, clothing styles, compete for our attention, focus, and, dare we say, worship. We worship all the secular gods by coveting and desiring more than what we have already been given. Contentment is far from our thoughts and feelings. We come full circle from the First Commandment to the close of the Commandments. You shall have no other gods. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the only true God.

In the words from Exodus, we are reminded of the two works of God the Father. In the first part, the alien work of God is revealed when He speaks of punishing the children for the sins of their fathers to the third and fourth generations. In the second part, the natural work of God is revealed when He speaks of showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments. The epitome of His love came in the sacrificial death of His son for the salvation of mankind. We are set free from eternal damnation on account of Christ's perfect obedience to the law.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

All righteousness by works is vain; The Law rings condemnation. True righteousness by faith I gain; Christ's work is my salvation. His death, that perfect sacrifice, Has paid the all sufficient price; In Him my hope is anchored. (LSB 568:4)

Friday of the Fifth Week in Lent

MARCH 27, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 15:33-47

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 5:1-6:1; Mark 15:33-47

"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"
(Mark 15:34)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The final words of Christ make a declaration. Christ is truly alone with the weight of all the sins of all people from all time bearing down upon him. He has completed the requirements of the law, and now the perfect sacrifice for all mankind is finished. "Why have you forsaken me?" is uttered, and He breathes his last. He is alone and dead. His father has turned His back on Him. The few that have come to the cross stand at a distance. All that is left is to bury Him.

It is not a glorious death. His death is a death of humiliation and torture. It is a bloody death filled with agony and pain. His disciples have left him but one, John. The local church leaders have stopped by to deride him and cast their insults upon Him. They truly kick Him when He is down. No mercy is shown to Him other than a bit of sour wine on a hyssop branch.

Often in our lives, we are left feeling all alone. We may cry out in a similar fashion, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" Various circumstances in our lives can leave us feeling as if no one is with us. We continually hear the shallow platitudes of those around us regarding the omnipresence of God. Yet the darkness in our lives seems overwhelming. The family is still fighting. The homework is still piling up. The parents are still divorced. The slanderous remarks still spew from fellow classmates in the hallways and on social media. We are left under the weight of our sin and abandonment.

It is in the sacrament of Holy Baptism that we are reminded that we are not alone. In all of the above circumstances, we see the separation and loneliness that exists on account of sin. In your Baptism, you are connected to the cross of Christ. His being forsaken by God the Father is your promise that God the Father will never abandon you or forsake you. Your Baptism is that seal, that promise that God never turns His back on you. It is not that you "were" Baptized but that you "are" Baptized. Daily, when the sins of this world bear down upon you, you can proclaim, "I am Baptized."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

I bind unto myself the name, The strong name of the Trinity By invocation of the same, The Three in One and One in Three, Of whom all nature has creation, Eternal Father, Spirit, Word. Praise to the Lord of my salvation; Salvation is of Christ the Lord! (LSB 604:5)

Saturday of the Fifth Week in Lent

MARCH 28, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Palm Sunday - Psalm 22:1, 7-8, 11; antiphon: Psalm 22:19, 21

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 7:1-25; Mark 16:1-20

*"But you, O Lord, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid!"
(Psalm 22:19)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The harvest full moon is one of creation's most profound optical illusions. As the moon comes up over the horizon, it looks daunting. The moon looks like it is bigger than the sun, and the red hue lights up the night sky. As the earth rotates and the moon rises in the sky, it begins to look smaller, and eventually, when the moon is at its peak, it looks like any other full moon on any given night. The optical illusion can be corrected by merely using your thumb extended in front of you as a point of reference when the moon is on the horizon and then again when the moon is at its peak. In both instances, the moon is the same size. It is not closer at the beginning and further away later in the night sky.

The trials and tribulations of this world can make the Lord seem far away. The sinful nature can be deceitful and lead one to believe that God is present in our lives, and we have been left all alone. The feeling of solitude is where Satan, sin, and the world work to pull our eyes away from an ever-present God. In those trials and tribulations, we are left to our own rationalization, where despair can set in, and in that despair, hopelessness. God can seem very distant.

Our God is not a distant God. He is not one who seems present and then appears far away. Our God is a God who is very present in our lives. In your Baptism, He has placed His name upon you. He has marked with the cross both upon your forehead and upon your heart as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. Our God is present in the Sacrament of the Altar. He is not "represented" but sacramentally united in, with, and under the bread and wine. In faith, we receive His true body and true blood for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith. His Holy Word in the Scriptures is a living, breathing document. The Scriptures are not just mere ink on paper but the Holy Word of God that reveals our Savior, Jesus Christ. Our God is not far off. He is an everlasting, ever-present God.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Stay with us, Lord, and keep us true; Preserve our faith our whole life through— Your Word alone our heart's defense, The Church's glorious confidence. (LSB 585:6)

Palm Sunday, Palmarum

MARCH 29, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 26:1-27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 8:1-32; Psalm 118; Hebrews 1:1-14

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?'" (Matthew 26:52-53)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

It's a response that makes sense to all of us. Of course, we would defend Jesus when evil men, armed with false charges, come to arrest the only One who could be called truly good. Matthew doesn't tell us who draws the sword, but John spills the beans and names Peter. Poor Peter is so often caught between his devotion to his Lord, his impulsiveness, and his all too human fear. A lot of people feel like they can relate to Peter wanting to do the right thing, but falling flat on their faces.

Here, Peter reacts out of love but also fear. Jesus' rebuke to Peter is not simply about some pacifistic ideals, though we would do well to consider our willingness to live and die by our modern swords; it is also a fierce reckoning with who Jesus is. It is not simply that Jesus will go meekly to his arrest and eventual death in submission to His Father's will, but also that Jesus does not need Peter to defend Him. At a word, Jesus can call down twelve legions of angels. How much help is that? A legion is a unit of soldiers in the Roman army, consisting of approximately 6,000 soldiers. Therefore, twelve legions would be around 72,000 soldiers, or roughly half of the entire Roman army, composed of fierce heavenly warriors, not just men. The point is clear: if Jesus needed to be saved from arrest at that moment, he could have handled it himself. Peter was failing to submit his own plan to the will of God.

I think most of us can understand Peter in this moment. We want to defend Jesus; we don't want to see him mishandled by evil men. We revile their intentions and can use this worthy impulse to justify all manner of lawlessness, hatred, violence, and even denial of the very nature of Jesus himself. It is hard for us to understand what Jesus is doing as we're left in anguish in our various Gardens of Gethsemane, but our call is to follow a crucified God who has already told us how the story will end. In that story, there is no room for fear.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Monday in Holy Week

MARCH 30, 2026

Today's Reading: John 12:1-36 (37-43)

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 9:1-28; Lamentations 1:1-22; Hebrews 2:1-18

"His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him." (John 12:16)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The ministry of Jesus subverts expectations so often that it is almost a cliché. Throughout his ministry, those whom you expect him to condemn, he instead commends; those you expect him to reject, he instead joins for a meal. This happens so often that Jesus is directly criticized for it. It's no wonder that this can all get a bit confusing, even for Jesus's closest disciples.

Judas Iscariot has been following Jesus for three years, and there are a lot of ways his response makes sense. He seems really concerned with the priorities of Jesus, so he asks him a fair question (John 12:4-5). It's completely reasonable that wealth should be spent on the poor rather than vain anointings. How often do we have these very same types of questions in our own churches?

Yet, Jesus tells us that in His Kingdom, the poor are rich, the weak are strong, the last are first, but it is still confusing when we encounter the realities of God's economy. How often have we looked back and seen God's merciful hand at work in our lives? Understood how He was with us through a difficult path we had to tread, when it looked and felt like we were all alone? Perspective is a valuable thing, and sometimes that perspective is gained through retrospection, that is, looking at the past and seeing it through the lens of a God who is busy making all things new.

At other times, even with the benefit of hindsight, we cannot see how God is working, how it is good, or evidence of His mercy in our lives. It is okay; even then, we're in good company, as the disciples did not understand many of the things of Jesus' ministry, despite witnessing it with their own eyes and having Him there to explain it. But what gives them the key to understanding? The glorification of Jesus. What do they mean by the glorification of Jesus? Looking ahead to verses 27-36, we see that the Father is glorified in the crucifixion of Jesus. Our eyes can only behold the crucifixion as shame and condemnation, but with eyes of faith, in the light of the resurrection, we can see that in the cross, there is glory. In the cross is victory over sin, death, and the devil, reconciliation of the world to the Father, which is the ultimate outpouring of His fatherly divine goodness and mercy.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die. O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin O'er captive death and conquered sin. (LSB 441:2)

Tuesday in Holy Week

MARCH 31, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 14:1-15:47

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 9:29-10:20; Lamentations 2:1-22; Hebrews 3:1-19

*"Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him."
(Mark 14:10-11)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Judas sought an opportunity to betray Jesus for money. It's easy to give Judas a bad rap, after all, what kind of fool betrays his beloved teacher after giving up everything to follow him for three years? But is Judas so far removed from us? Are his actions that illogical? Why give up everything for someone who keeps turning everything on its head, upsetting norms, and infuriating powerful people? Would any of us want to be in the crosshairs of powerful rulers just because of our proximity and faithfulness to the teacher? Especially one who seems to have everything backwards? Why not just cut your losses, get a little money out of it, and carry on with the rest of your life? There is a certain logic to Judas's thinking. Sin can often be quite logical.

Sometimes we like to sugarcoat our sin, talking about it like a trap we fell into accidentally, as if that somehow removes our culpability. Surely, we are better than Judas. Perhaps our evil is passive, like those things we confess on Sunday morning that we left undone. Certainly, there is a way in which sin can tempt us to blindness, laziness, or apathy, so we just fail to act appropriately. We don't usually see the ways that we actively seek out ways to sin. We don't see the ways we betray Jesus.

This betrayal comes to us cloaked in our own self-justifications; the myriad ways we excuse, explain, and dismiss our sins. There are many times we'd rather be righteous in the eyes of men than humble at the feet of Jesus. We would like to find sensible ways to work in his kingdom, ways that look like winning. We'd like the approval of the religious power brokers and the esteem of our colleagues. We want comfort and assurance in everything but the words of Jesus. This can leave us, like Judas, looking for a different way, a shortcut, a more comfortable path.

We do not avoid the path of Judas by wrestling with our own willpower, our own desire to betray Jesus for a simpler road. Instead, because we know our Lord and his mercy and grace, we confess these sins, bring them to Him, and look to the comfort of his word and promises to guide our steps through the narrow way.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*What is the world to me With all its vaunted pleasure When You, and You alone,
Lord Jesus are my treasure! You only, dearest Lord, My soul's delight shall be;
You are my peace, my rest. What is the world to me! (LSB 730:1)*

Wednesday in Holy Week

APRIL 1, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 22:1-23:56

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 10:21-11:10; Lamentations 3:1-66; Hebrews 4:1-16

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Peter said to him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.’ Jesus said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.’” (Luke 22:31-34)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Exorcism and possession are popular topics for media in our age, which seems to have moved from outright secularism to acceptance of all spiritualities. In the popular imagination, these possessions culminate in a violent and dramatic force of wills between a protagonist and a demonic entity. Fiction makes it seem as if we must either use our own strength to battle the darkness, or employ some secret knowledge, or sometimes invoke the name of Jesus, like an ancient protection spell. But this text shows us what is really going on behind the curtain of the spiritual world.

Here, Jesus directly tells Peter that Satan demanded possession of him, and instead of responding with fear, trembling, or even trust in Jesus, Peter makes a declarative statement about the strength of his own faith. Peter is certain he would never fail in his love for Jesus. He is certain about the strength of his own faith. Luke doesn't tell us here how Peter responded to Jesus's disclosure. I wonder if Peter argued with him? I suspect he did. Luke does tell us a few verses later that Jesus was, of course, correct in his prophecy, and Peter weeps bitterly as he understands his own betrayal in light of Christ's words. How foolish he must have felt, first to declare his certainty, then to be explicitly warned by Jesus, and yet still fall into denying him three separate times!

But Peter's story here gives us hope. The Word of Christ will so often call us back from our own sin, our own failings, the temptations that we have fallen into, and have spent days, months, or years justifying. The realization of our deep failings, in light of Christ's love and mercy, can feel like a deep betrayal of all we have been called to be in this world.

Yet we do not have to rely on the strength of our own faith, the purity of our love and devotion, or anything within us to keep us in the love of Christ. Rather, we can look to Him who thwarts the devil's demands with His Word, His action, His Body and Blood for all who trust in him.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

If my sins give me alarm And my conscience grieve me, Let Your cross my fear disarm; Peace of conscience give me. Help me see forgiveness won By Your holy passion If for me He slays His Son God must have compassion! (LSB 440:5)

Holy Thursday

APRIL 2, 2026

Today's Reading: John 13:1-15 (34-35)

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 12:1-28; Lamentations 4:1-22; Hebrews 5:1-14; Psalm 31

"He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, do you wash my feet?' Jesus answered him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!'" (John 13:6-8)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Today is Holy Thursday, the day Jesus institutes the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Yet, today's reading comes from the only one of the four gospels that doesn't record the institution of the Supper, instead highlighting Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Many traditions, from Amish to Anglicans, take this so seriously that they also practice foot washing, symbolizing humility and service to one another, as part of their worship. It can be a beautiful and intimate practice, and there's nothing wrong with emulating it; in fact, Jesus says in verse 15 that he has given us an example to follow. However, it would be easy to be so caught up in the action of foot-washing that you could miss what Jesus is trying to teach his disciples, and by extension, us, through this reading.

Jesus tells Peter that what he is doing now will be understood by them later, pointing through the veil of death to his eventual resurrection. In the light of the coming Sunday, all things will be made new, but first they must rest in the mystery of what is happening today. Jesus further elucidates to Peter that the action of washing is meant to demonstrate that only those Jesus has washed can have any share of Him. Surely, he does not mean only the twelve men in the room with him, those able to physically submit to his foot washing. No, he is pointing to a larger reality: the dirt of our sin must be, and can only be, washed by Him. We cannot wash away this sin with just plain water, but rather water that is included with God's command and combined with God's Word. Just as bread and wine alone will not forgive our sins, but combined with God's Word and promise, they cleanse us. In faith, we can recognize this merciful Gift of God. Instead of responding defensively, as Peter initially does, declaring the lunacy of our Lord and Savior serving us in such a way, we can see our need for it, and joyously allow the Lord's mercy to wash each corner of our lives. Not just our feet, but our heads and hands also.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Now have I found consolation, Comfort in my tribulation, Balm to heal the troubled soul. God, my shield from ev'ry terror, Cleanses me from sin and error, Makes my wounded spirit whole. (LSB 620:6)

Good Friday

APRIL 3, 2026

Today's Reading: John 18:1-19:42

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 12:29-32; 13:1-16; Lamentations 5:1-22; Hebrews 6:1-20; Psalm 22

"Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.'" (John 18:36)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

It is a remarkable declaration for God incarnate, whose Lordship extends into all creation, that his kingdom is not of this world. With this statement, he does not deny his kingship to Pilate; instead, he explains its character. I'm sure this was a baffling statement to Pilate, who certainly would have understood kingship through the lens of strength and power. If you had the power to prevent your capture and execution, of course, you would use it. What person wouldn't? Jesus is telling Pilate that his capture and imprisonment aren't a sign of the weakness of his kingship, but rather that earthly power is not the measure of his kingship. Most kings measure their power through armies, wealth, and raw power. Governments still operate this way today, forming alliances when possible and projecting strength against potential enemies. Survival is about strength. This is so deep in our psyche, such established common sense, that it is easy for Christians to even approach the church's activity in the world this way. It is easy to imagine that the church must always build alliances to consolidate its strength, wield its power to ward off perceived enemies, and do all these things in the name of protecting Jesus.

Yet Jesus shows Pilate, and us, a better way. The Lord of all creation, who is about to lay down his life of his own accord, shows power in weakness. What is the cross but ultimate weakness? The Romans and religious authorities certainly looked at Jesus, dead on the cross, and felt they'd won a victory over this strange group of disciples. They had put an end to this folly by exercising their worldly power, leveraging it against a threatening teacher. They assumed Jesus's kingdom was of this world, that it would perish with him, and that what they saw with their eyes was all there is. This is the only way the powers of this world can operate. They do not have eyes to see the kingdom that is not of this world; the kingdom that is powerful in weakness, that strengthens the downtrodden, that liberates the captives, gives sight to the blind, that raises the dead. This world's kingdoms will always think they have the last word in death and destruction, unaware they've already been cast down from their thrones by the One who will always have the last word.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle; Sing the ending of the fray. Now above the cross, the trophy, Sound the loud triumphant lay; Tell how Christ, the world's redeemer, As a victim won the day. (LSB 454:1)

Holy Saturday

APRIL 4, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 27:57-66

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 13:17-14:9; Hebrews 7:1-22

"The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, 'Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, "After three days I will rise." Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, "He has risen from the dead," and the last fraud will be worse than the first.'" (Matthew 27:62-64)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Holy Saturday can be a difficult day to reflect on, because it is the in-between time where it seems the forces of evil have won, the Lord is dead, but we can still catch a glimpse of Sunday out of the corner of our eyes. We know what tomorrow brings, and we want to jump to that. But let's sit on Holy Saturday. Holy Saturday is a day where we reflect on the victory of the powers of darkness as they gloat, celebrate, and mock. The Lord told us just yesterday that His kingdom is not of this world, so there will be many times when it appears that the world is governed only by malice and cruelty. Turning on the evening news on any given night can be a strain on any normal person's assertion that the world is governed by an all-powerful, benevolent God. There is little we see with our eyes that convinces us of the Lordship of Jesus. In a world teeming with terror, genocide, fear, and brutality, it looks like the darkness has won.

This Holy Saturday we read about was no different. The chief priests and Pharisees think they've won, and all they need to seal their victory is for Jesus to stay dead. But here Matthew gives us a glimpse into the victors' mindsets. Even while victorious, they are afraid. They remember Jesus' promise that after his death, he would rise in three days, and instead of finding hope in that promise, they find a threat. Frightened, they do everything they can to protect themselves from what they assume will be a mere mythologizing of Jesus. On the surface, it seems perfectly rational: wait three days, let everyone see Jesus was speaking nonsense, and move along as if nothing happened. As if nothing has changed. It's a logic that makes sense on Saturday, when Jesus is still cold in his grave.

Unlike the chief priests and Pharisees, however, we know the rest of the story. We know what's coming. We know how foolish their logic will look in the daylight tomorrow. Armed with that knowledge, we can look at the Holy Saturdays in our own lives and world, where the Lord seems silent, absent, defeated, and know that the gloating will not last the morning.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Oh perfect life of love! All, all, is finished now, All that He left His throne above To do for us below. (LSB 452:1)

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Morning and Evening Prayers by Lutheran Service Builder © 2023 Concordia Publishing House.

Higher Things Reflections are free, like the Gospel! They may be reproduced for congregational, personal, and other non-commercial use. Please use the following attribution: "Daily Reflections are provided by Higher Things. www.higherthings.org. Used with permission."

Higher Things exists and grows on the basis of donations and free-will offerings from congregations and individuals. All donations are tax-deductible. If you wish to contribute to the work of Higher Things, please send your donation to:

Higher Things, Inc.
P.O. Box 175
Lisbon, IA 52253

(Donations are also accepted at www.higherthings.org/giving via credit card or Venmo @HigherThings)

Visit our website at www.higherthings.org to read, listen to, or subscribe to Reflections each day.

