

REFLECTIONS

The Resurrection of our Lord-
Pentecost Eve

April 5, 2026 - May 23, 2026



This season's Reflections were written by

*Rev. Justin Chester, pastor of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in
Spokane, WA*

*Rev. Brent Kuhlman, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in
Murdock, NE*

*Rev. Samuel Schuldheisz, pastor of Beautiful Savior Lutheran
Church in Milton, WA*

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

*Rev. Jeffrey Ries, pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in
Tacoma, WA*

*Rev. Brett Simek, pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in
Sioux Falls, SD.*

*Rev. Jeffrey Hemmer, pastor of Bethany Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Fairview Heights, IL and Signal Hill Lutheran Church in
Belleville, IL*

ap·ro·pos

What Does God's Word Say About Transgenderism?

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.

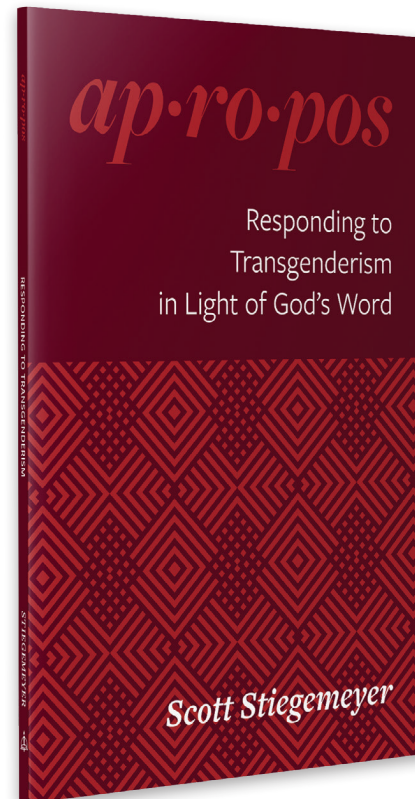
Higher Things Reflections are free, like the Gospel! They may be reproduced for congregational, personal, and other non-commercial use. Please use the following attribution: "Daily Reflections are provided by Higher Things. www.higherthings.org. Used with permission."

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.



In *Responding to Transgenderism in Light of God's Word*, see a thorough explanation of why transgenderism is a sin and find the words to discuss transgenderism with those around you, leading them back to Christ's design for creation.

This series on polemics and apologetics takes up contemporary topics in faith and culture, helping Christians understand the challenges they face and interact with them faithfully.

Learn more at cph.org



1.800.325.3040

© 2026 Concordia Publishing House

A Short Form for Daily Reflection

ADAPTED FROM LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK

Make the sign of the Holy Cross and say:

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

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

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

Read the Daily Lectionary selections.

Read the Reflection for the Day.

Say the Apostles’ Creed.

Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

Pray one of these little prayers:

(In the Morning)

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

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

(In the Evening)

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

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

Pentecost Eve

MAY 23, 2026

Today’s Reading: John 14:8-21

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 20:22-21:9; Luke 20:45-21:19

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

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Let’s be honest. At first glance, this is a difficult reading.

First, there’s Jesus’ criticism of Philip, who made a very pious-seeming request to see God the Father. “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (Jn 14:9) Maybe a little stung, would our self-talk reply, “C’mon, Philip! Don’t bring your silly requests to Jesus! You should know better!”

Then Jesus makes the connection between loving Him and obeying His Commandments. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (v. 15) And again, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (v. 21). Again, consciences pricked by the Law, our poor record of keeping the Commandments makes us ask how sincerely we love Jesus. So, do you really know Jesus? Do you really love Jesus? Not very well, it seems.

And yet, in the very middle of this reading is a promise from Jesus: He will ask the Father who will send the Holy Spirit, the Helper, the Spirit of truth. We confess in the Catechism, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His Gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”

On our own, we cannot know Jesus. On our own, we cannot keep His Commandments. But we are not on our own. Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to be with us forever. It was not up to us to make ourselves Christian. It is not up to us to keep ourselves Christian. The Spirit does for us what we could never do for ourselves. And He does not abandon us once He has given us the Gift of faith. He both gives the Gift of faith and enables us to live as faithful people. The Helper remains with us forever.

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and ever-living God, You fulfilled Your promise by sending the gift of the Holy Spirit to unite disciples of all nations in the cross and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. By the preaching of the Gospel spread this gift to the ends of the earth; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for Pentecost Eve)

Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 22, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Pentecost - Psalm 68:1, 4a, c, 11a, 33b, 35a; antiphon: Liturgical Text; Psalm 68:3

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 20:1-21; Luke 20:19-44

"God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him!" (Psalm 68:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Have you ever done one of those eating challenges? "Finish this 144oz steak in 5 minutes and your whole bill is free!" If you can eat this 44lb burrito in 15 minutes, we'll put a small Polaroid of you on the wall with your name in Sharpie underneath!" At first, it's delicious. After a few bites, the deliciousness wears off. Suddenly, what might have once been your favorite food now evokes revulsion at every bite.

Who can endure 50 days of Alleluias? We gave up our Alleluias, the joyful "Praise the Lord" for 40 days of Lent (plus three extra weeks if your congregation observed Pre-Lent!). And it was nice when it came back at Easter. But sometimes the joy feels a little forced. What once felt like pure joy in the octave of Easter now sometimes feels forced.

But now we're on the cusp of a transition. We've had 48 days of Alleluias, and we're just 2 days before the Church Year returns to normal, but still the Psalm with its Easter Alleluias beckons us, "The righteous shall be glad. They shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy! Alleluia."

That's not an imperative, not a command. It doesn't compel our rejoicing or force us to put on an Alleluia face. Sometimes in this Christian life, our alleluias feel more scripted than spontaneous. And that's ok.

Even the Psalmist acknowledges that not everything goes according to the Divine ideal. "Shall" implies a "not yet". "Shall be glad." "Shall exult before God." "Shall be jubilant with joy." And then in the middle of the psalm, "God shall arise." "His enemies shall be scattered." "And those who hate him shall flee before him!" But those aren't fully realized yet.

Sometimes we have to wait for the fulfillment of the "shall." But in the Church, shall is certain. The future is guaranteed. God made a promise to you in Baptism that he cannot and will not break. You have been joined to Christ's death and resurrection. All your enemies—sin, death, and Satan—have been scattered. Their future is also certain. They will flee before the Lord on the Day of His return. You, the righteous, shall be eternally glad. And on that day, no one will need to script the Alleluias.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Scatter the darkness, break the gloom; Sun, reveal an empty tomb Shining with joy for all our sorrows, Hope and peace for all tomorrows, Life un eclipsed by doubt and dread: Christ has risen from the dead! (LSB 481:1)

The Resurrection of Our Lord

APRIL 5, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 16:1-8

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 14:10-31; Hebrews 7:23-8:13

"And he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.'" (Mark 16:6)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The Sabbath was past, and it was time to do everything as it should be according to their customs. The women bought spices to anoint the body of Jesus for his burial. They were willing to go where He had lain for three days; they were willing to make themselves unclean according to the Law of Moses to anoint their Lord's body. Like so many other times in Mark's Gospel, God emphatically intervenes. Three women had no chance of rolling away the stone blocking Jesus' tomb. They were as curious as to how they would roll the stone away as they were to see an open tomb at their tomb. No more would everything be as it should be according to their customs, according to the Law of Moses. God emphatically proclaims the Gospel through the white robed young preacher. God's anointed Jesus of Nazareth, whom they cared for; He is risen! He is not in the tomb. The messenger of God, the angel appearing as a young man, proclaims the Gospel, the Good News of the empty tomb. No more will the stench of death claim you, nor will death's sting have any power over you. No more will the Law declare you unclean. Jesus died to your sin, making them His own dying to the curse of the Law. Swallowing up death in His death, and emphatically crying out from the cross, from the empty tomb before His Father, and before these women who saw Him die, that death is no more. No more doing everything as it should be, no more would everything be how it had been. "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." As the women ran away, trembling, astonished at this proclamation. You also go from here free, astonished at what God has done. The God who emphatically came down from heaven, taken on human flesh, ripped the heavens open at His Son's Baptism and walked among us, died for us, and rose that we, too, shall rise. The life of Jesus is your life. God emphatically unites you to Him in your Baptism. That you would be free in Christ indeed, and go into your daily life, astonished at what God has done.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, through Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, You overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. We humbly pray that we may live before You in righteousness and purity forever; 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 Resurrection of Our Lord)

Easter Monday

APRIL 6, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 24:13-35

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

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

One can only imagine the smile Jesus might have hidden from the two men on the Emmaus road as He asked them "what things" had occurred in Jerusalem. The two men were shocked. This stranger walking with them had to be the only man who had not seen, not even heard of, the events that had happened in Jerusalem in those days. So the men tell Him. Hiding that smile, Jesus speaks as only He can. "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" These men, who had been in the company of the astonished women, had no answer. Dead men tell no tales. Jesus of Nazareth showed promise, but in the end, He died. Yet it is for fools like them, for fools such as us, that Christ comes. The women did not see Him, yet they proclaimed what their eyes did see, and what their ears heard from the lips of their angel preacher. The men did see, yet they did not yet believe what their ears heard from the lips of their hidden Lord. So Jesus teaches them, opening all the Scriptures and things concerning Himself. Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and Son of Mary, proclaims the promise of God's mighty deeds of old fulfilled in the promise of God's anointed one who would come, suffer, and on the third day rise. Yet these men still did not know who was among them. Who walked with them. So Jesus finally, perhaps, lets that smile slip a bit. "So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther..." On the night He was with those whose minds would confess their unbelief, their wonder of this man, Jesus breaks bread with them. More than that, though, He opens the scriptures to them, gives them the words of Gospel promise concerning Himself, and breaks bread and gave it to the men as He did on the night in which He was betrayed. Jesus had revealed Himself by the breaking of the bread. This would be how the Gospel would go out, from the preachers Jesus would send to His church, to teach the scriptures concerning Himself, to preach the Gospel that opens our eyes and makes us alive, and to strengthen and sustain us in the breaking of the bread, His very body for us to eat, and His true and precious Blood for us to drink. Given and shed for you. For the forgiveness of sins.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, in the paschal feast You restore all creation. Continue to send Your heavenly gifts upon Your people that they may walk in perfect freedom and receive eternal life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for Easter Evening/Easter Monday)

Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 21, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: The Lord's Prayer - 1st Petition

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 16:41-17:13; Numbers 18:1-19:22; Luke 20:1-18

"God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also." (The Small Catechism, The Lord's Prayer-First Petition)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What's in a name? What is a name? It's a label. It's the way in which we are known. It carries with it our reputation, an impression of our character. A new teacher may think they know you because they know your older sibling who came before you, and assume you will be the same because you share the same last name. A name is more than a word used to get our attention; it carries with it our very identity.

Yahweh, God, and Father are all names by which we know God. They are holy, like nothing else. He is like no one else. He is not like other "gods." He is gracious, merciful, compassionate, and forgiving. He desires and makes possible your forgiveness by sending His own Son, the second Person of God, being of the same substance, the same stuff, God Himself to die for you. What God does that? What God sacrifices Himself to save His people? Your God does. He is not like other "gods."

He is not like us, though, either. We are frail, weak, and prone to making mistakes and failures. We are imperfect, unholy sinners who drag His name through the mud. He is perfect, righteous, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. Yet He becomes like us, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bones, born of woman, born under the law, born under the consequence of sin and death. He is like us in every way, even tempted as we are, but without sin. Though He is not without death. Through faith, that death is for you, that forgiveness is for you. God is for you. He is your God, and you are His.

So He puts His name on you. In the waters of Holy Baptism, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is put on you. You are labeled. You are marked. You are known; your character and identity are in Him. You are not your weakness, your frailty, your mistakes, or your sins. They have no part with you anymore. Leave them behind, dead on the cross, buried in the tomb, drowned in the waters of your Baptism. You are Christian. You are forgiven. God, our Father, knows you because He knows Christ. So He knows, and you may know, that just as Christ is risen from the dead, so, too, shall you rise each day new and eternally new to live in His Kingdom. After all, His name, your name, is on it.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Our Father, hallowed be Thy name. O holy God, keep me holy today and to life everlasting in Your name. Amen.

Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 20, 2026

Today's Reading: Numbers 16:23-40

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 16:23-40; Luke 19:29-48

"If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the Lord." (Numbers 16:29-30)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The time for God's choice between Moses and Korah has come. If Korah dies a natural death and nothing outrageous happens, then Moses isn't God's guy to lead Israel. If Korah lives to see tomorrow, he will take Moses' place and be declared God's chosen servant and leader. However, if something outrageous does happen, if something new and different happens, like the earth opening its mouth and swallowing Korah, then Moses remains. The odds appear to be in Korah's favor, at least they do if you ignore the plagues that God brought upon Egypt through Moses and the whole bit with the Red Sea. If you can forget about that, it seems Korah is a guaranteed winner.

As long as you are willing to overlook history and the facts, Korah has everything on his side. His revolt against Moses and his authority is a sure thing, or it would be if his authority didn't come from God. As long as you're blind to everything except this moment, rebellion is a great idea. That's the way it seems, after all, what does authority know? What do parents know about growing up in this world? What do teachers know about having a social life? What do pastors know about living in the real world? Who are they to tell me what to do? As long as you are willing to overlook God establishing them as authorities over you for your good, you're totally right.

But if you're not, you, like Korah, might be in trouble. If you're honest with yourself, your history, your rebellion, wanting to do things your way rather than God's way, you might want to keep an eye on the ground beneath your feet. You are in danger unless something even more outrageous than that happens. Unless God would actually choose you. Unless something as outrageous as God becoming Man, a finite infant, would happen. Unless God would choose you over His own Son, deliver up Christ to be crucified that you might live. Unless Jesus rises from the dead to put an end to the power of death and the grave, you might live in fear. Fear not. Your sins are forgiven. Christ is risen!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord God, our gracious Father, deliver us from the fear of punishment and death along with the guilt of our sin that we would live boldly and confidently in your mercy and forgiveness for the sake of your crucified and risen Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Easter Tuesday

APRIL 7, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 24:36-49

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

"As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, 'Peace to you!'" (Luke 24:36)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

See Jesus. When your anxieties and doubts fill your mind. When you feel your best isn't good enough, or you're at your worst. When you know you've said hurtful things, done hurt to others, and caused yourself harm. See Jesus.

Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, talked with adulterers, healed the sick and the unclean, and associated with those unassociated members of society. Jesus called ordinary fishermen to be His disciples and taught them despite their unbelief and designs for the kingdom of God.

For those disciples, Jesus appeared and stood among them. What they had done had to come to mind. They abandoned Him, betrayed Him, denied Him, witnessed His death and shame before the world as He hung on the cross. Yet they see Jesus Himself, among them, and He said to them, "Peace to you!"

Then Jesus shows them His hands and His feet, inviting them to touch Him. As if a ghost stood before them to haunt them, He asks them for something to eat and ate the broiled fish they offered Him. What the women from the tomb and the men from Emmaus had said was true. He has risen!

Their master stood among them. Proclaiming peace, Absolution— they were forgiven before God and man. Then Jesus opened their minds to understand all that the scriptures had written from the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. Jesus, the crucified, fulfilled them; Jesus, the resurrected, fulfilled and proclaimed this to them, and now they, His preachers, would go and proclaim this truth to you. That you would know in your darkness, your suffering, your time of death, God is with you. See Jesus in His Word, in your Baptism, in bread and wine. These are where He comes to you, stands among you, and through your pastor proclaims, "Peace to you!" before God and man.

Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia! He sees you, is with you, and has secured peace for you, and has proclaimed this to you in His Gospel promises, that trusting in Jesus, you may come at last to the Kingdom of your heavenly Father, and see Jesus.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, through the resurrection of Your Son You have secured peace for our troubled consciences. Grant us this peace evermore that trusting in the merit of Your Son we may come at last to the perfect peace of heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for Easter Tuesday)

Easter Wednesday

APRIL 8, 2026

Today's Reading: John 21:1-14

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

"That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea." (John 21:7)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

They went fishing; it was Peter's idea. There were seven of them, and all through the night they caught nothing. As day would break, Jesus stood on the shore, though the disciples would not know Him. This man told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat, and they obliged. What followed was a catch so numerous that they were not able to haul it in—153 fish. John realized it first. He confessed his Lord. Peter, out of embarrassment or humility of seeing His Lord whom He denied and abandoned to the cross, hurled Himself like Jonah into the Sea of Tiberias. The other disciples bring their boat ashore, net full of fish, and as Simon Peter, son of Jonah, brings the fish to his Lord for breakfast. This was the third time Jesus had revealed Himself to the disciples after He was raised from the dead. Peter had denied Jesus as His Lord had told him he would. Peter floundered to the Sea, bringing what came from the Sea to His Lord for their meal and the conversation that would follow. Jesus would absolve and restore Peter shortly after this meal. None of the disciples asked, "Who are you?" They had no reason. Their Lord, who walked on water to them, calmed storms in front of them, and had worked a miraculous catch once before this was among them again. Peter throws himself into the Sea, and Jesus restores Him out of it. This is exactly what Jesus came down from heaven for: that Peter would die to his sin, die with his crucified Lord, and emerge from the waters of the Sea of Tiberias to be received by His Lord, to be absolved of His sins, and to take his place as apostle and evangelist. The disciples see their Lord, confess their Lord, and eat with Him. Jesus, crucified, died, and was buried, stood on the shore and revealed Himself again to His disciples in this way. That just as we die to sin, thrown into the waters of our baptisms, we rise from those waters in the reality of Christ's resurrection. Christ gives us the boat, rather the ark of His bride, the church, to keep us afloat on our baptisms. He sustains us with daily bread, nourishes us with His grace of the Gospel given through His Word joined to water, bread, and wine. That just as He has been raised from the dead, we, too, shall rise and in the reality already given in your baptisms, you will abide in His presence and rejoice with Him in eternal glory.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, by the glorious resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, You destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light. Grant that we who have been raised with Him may abide in His presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for Easter Wednesday)

Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 19, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Peter 4:7-11 (12-14)

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 16:1-22; Luke 19:11-28

"'All shall be done,' said Aslan. 'But it may be harder than you think.'" –C.S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"The end of all things is at hand." (1 Peter 4:7). Peter knew the trials involved with living as God's child in this world, and he sought to encourage us in Christ. We trust that Christ's return is certain, but the timing is unknown to us. It feels like the day of resurrection will never come. During this long and indefinite wait, what shall we do? Peter instructs us to continue loving one another and showing hospitality, utilizing our God-given gifts for the benefit of our neighbors, and speaking and serving as those whose words and actions are grounded in the wisdom and strength of God.

We are called to live in this world not for ourselves, but for others. In this, we live with a sense of urgent readiness, not for more of this fallen world, but for the fullness of life eternal which comes with Christ on the Last Day. Because our only true hope is in Christ's imminent coming with His kingdom, we are free to sacrifice the gifts we have in this world for the sake of our neighbor, know that God will continue to provide. In living out our vocations in this way, we bear witness to others of the imminent coming of Christ.

Peter likewise knows all too well the fiery trials that accompany the ultimate vocation of those who are in Christ. It should come as no surprise that those in Christ are at odds with this world (just as Jesus admonished in John 15 and 16). So, Peter tells us, in spite of any suffering we may experience at the hands of this world, our sharing in Christ's sufferings is cause for rejoicing, because "when His glory is revealed," (His glorious return) we will most certainly rejoice forever! Rejoicing in our suffering in this world is a part of our witness to those around us that our faith is rooted in the hope of resurrection. Since our comfort, strength, and hope come from His grace, which was given to us via His suffering, let us rejoice that our suffering at the hands of this world unites us to Christ's passion, and therefore to His resurrection and life eternal. Thanks be to God for Peter, whose words point us to Christ, urging us to live with love, serve with humility, and rejoice in our suffering, knowing that Christ's victory is certain.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Because Your Son knew agony and loss, Felt desolation, grief and scorn and shame, We know You will be with us, come what may, Your loving presence near, always the same. 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 764:4,5)

Monday of the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 18, 2026

Today's Reading: Ezekiel 36:22-28

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 14:26-45; Numbers 15:1-41; Luke 18:35-19:10

"O Lord, command what you will and grant what you command." (Confessions, St. Augustine of Hippo)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

People often put their names on valuable belongings, even items they treasure solely for sentimental reasons that are unfathomable to others. One's name is tantamount to possession and value. God's name upon His people, Israel, equals His possession of them as well as their value to Him. Beginning with Abraham, God did not choose His people based on their goodness, morality, or value. When God first called Abraham (originally Abram), he was a pagan who worshipped the pagan gods of his Chaldean family. Even as Abram/Abraham responded to the Lord's promise to him and His offspring, he still violated that trust in numerous ways, just as would Isaac, Jacob/Israel, and his sons. From there, it gets no better. From then through the time of the Judges, then the Kings and Prophets, God's people continued to stray from His will. Time and time again, there was grumbling against God, tempting God, fornication, and murder, and all of this emanating from their constant propensity for idolatry.

How could God place His holy name upon such a wretched people as these? How could He call them His people, His treasured possession (Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 7:6), even, "the apple of His eye" (Deuteronomy 32:10)? The answer is found in God's own declaration concerning Himself first in Exodus 34:6, and repeated not less than five times in Numbers, in Nehemiah, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets Joel and Jonah: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..." In merciful and gracious steadfast love, God placed His name upon Israel. God's name is His reputation, and His reputation is mercy. Through Ezekiel, God reminded Israel that they had done nothing to earn His favor. "It is not for your sake ... that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name." (Ezekiel 36:22)

This is the very reason that you can trust your Baptism! When God sprinkled clean water on you, making you clean (Ezekiel 36:25), it came with His name placed upon you, the mark of Christ's cross placed upon your brow and heart. How is it that God would or could save you, a poor, miserable sinner? God's name is His reputation, and His reputation is mercy. He saves you not for your sake, but for the sake of His holy name, which you bear. "By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Christian, firmly hold this gift And give God thanks forever! It gives the power to uplift In all that you endeavor. When nothing else revives your soul, Your Baptism stands and makes you whole And then in death completes you. (LSB 596:5)

Thursday of the Week of Easter

APRIL 9, 2026

Today's Reading: Job 19:23-27

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

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

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Job endured the cross God had laid on him. That sure didn't seem fair. Yet Job is not without hope; he knows that God has not abandoned him. Job had everything taken away from him. Lives of his children and wife, his own health, and his fortune. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness had died and left Job for dead. Yet sitting down in the midst of such darkness, Job bears his cross and knows God is with him. His God is with him, even through the worst of times, through the worst of friends, through the darkness; God is there.

Job's words were written; they were inscribed in a book. That by reading Job's words, you would believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing in Him, you, as Job did, would have life in His Name. Job's words—written with iron, or lead, engraved in rock, or ink engraved on paper, forever.

It is in Job's suffering that He sees how much he has lost, and yet it is in that suffering that he makes that great confession, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth." Job knew he was a sinner, deserving nothing. Yet, despite losing everything, he had not lost God. "And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!"

So it was for Job, and it still remains true for us today. Though we suffer and bear crosses laid on us by God, though we live in an unfair world, we are not without hope. We who deserve nothing better than Job, who no man was like, who feared God and turned away from evil cling to the God who lays the cross, and at the proper time when my skin has been destroyed we may see the God who also took on flesh, who suffered, who wept, who cried out, took up His cross and died.

The God who suffers and dies is Jesus of Nazareth, your Redeemer who rose again, and lives and reigns at the right hand of His Father. He will stand upon the earth at the last, and you who suffer, who have conquered as a baptized child of God, joined to your Redeemer, will rise, live, and serve Him in His Kingdom for all eternity. It's not fair, yet it is glorious. Christ is risen, He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus, my Redeemer, lives; Likewise I to life shall waken. He will bring me where He is; Shall my courage then be shaken? Shall I fear, or could the Head Rise and leave His members dead? (LSB 741:2)

Friday of the Week of Easter

APRIL 10, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 or 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

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

"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:56-57)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Behold! Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Paul tells of a mystery. A mystery that will unfold at the fullness of time, at the sound of the trumpet. The perishable will put on the imperishable. Your mortal body must put on immortality. On the Last Day, Christ will return and raise you and me, and all the dead, and the words of the prophet Hosea that Paul writes to them will be fulfilled.

A timeless truth, the promise Hosea proclaimed was as good as fulfilled when God spoke it to His prophet. In Jesus, that promise is fulfilled. In Jesus, death is swallowed up by His death; in Christ's victory over the grave, death is overcome. Death's sting is no more.

In Jesus, God's promises are fulfilled. In Jesus, the Law of God is satisfied. Death is swallowed up forever, sin has no power over you, and the Law is silent towards you. In Jesus, the victory is won; God's timeless truths foretold by His prophets of old, by His apostles, and to you by His preachers are true and effective for you still today.

In Holy Baptism are united to this truth, and the reality of the perishable putting on the unperishable, your mortal body puts on the immortality of Christ Jesus your Savior who you are united as baptized children of God through the water that washed you and claimed you from the sting of death, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Nothing for you to do according to the Law, truly a mystery that is proclaimed to us by God's mouthpieces from this time forth and forevermore. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"Laugh to scorn the gloomy grave And at death no longer tremble; He, the Lord, who came to save Will at last His own assemble. They will go their Lord to meet, Treading death beneath their feet." (LSB 741:7)

Seventh Sunday of Easter

MAY 17, 2026

Today's Reading: John 15:26-16:4

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 14:1-25; Luke 18:18-34

"...now we cultivate the fear of God, justice, kindness, faith, and the expectation of the future given us through the Crucified One... The more we are persecuted and martyred, the more do others in ever increasing numbers become believers." ~Justin the Martyr (100AD – 165AD)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Most of Jesus' words to His disciples are intended to prepare them for His departure via the cross, where He would pay the cost of their salvation. In our text, Jesus' words prepare His Apostles for their eventual crosses – the hour which is coming when, "whoever kills you will think he is offering a service to God." (Jn 16:2) A significant portion of Jesus' words to His disciples in all the Gospels are about the cost of being His disciple. (Matthew 10:38, 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23, 14:25-33).

As His disciple, where is your cross? You needn't go looking for it. You bear it marked upon your forehead and over your heart as given in the rite of Holy Baptism. When you were made God's own child in that water and Word, you were made an enemy of Satan, and thus an enemy of this fallen world over which he rules (John 12:31). No one baptized, who stands upon the rock of Christ's truth, is immune from the scorn of Satan or this world. That is the cross borne by you and all of God's saints.

Dying to yourself and to this world doesn't have to mean martyrdom. Still, you face a world where Scriptural truth is despised, God's created order is denied, and the truth of a merciful God is rejected. The cost could include the loss of friendships, family ties, the respect of your peers, and worldly success. So it is that, in our text, Jesus' admonition likewise includes the promise that the Holy Spirit will be the immutable source of your Christian life and witness.

"I have said all these things to keep you from falling away." (John 16:1) Jesus' admonition is a gift. When the world rages against you, you are not left alone. The Holy Spirit keeps your eyes fixed upon Jesus, who authored and perfected your faith, enduring the cross for the joy set before Him. (Hebrews 12:2) The Spirit continues to call you by the Gospel, enlighten you with His gifts, keeping you in the true faith, daily and richly forgiving your sins. The cost you pay of dying to this world is a pittance compared to the cost of Christ's own blood, which has bought you and made you an heir with Him to eternity.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter

MAY 16, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Easter 7 - Psalm 27:1, 11a, 12; antiphon: Psalm 27:7a, 8b, 9a
Daily Lectionary: Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33; Luke 18:1-17

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Some of our favorite stories are filled with majestic, mighty, and magnificent castles. Think of Hogwarts Castle in Harry Potter. Cair Paravel in The Chronicles of Narnia. Minas Tirith or Helm's Deep in The Lord of the Rings. Camelot in the tales of King Arthur. And the list could go on.

The true story of the Scripture features a majestic, mighty, magnificent castle as well. Only it's not found in the palaces of Persia. Not atop the bulwarks of Babylon or standing watch in the strong towers of Tyre and Sidon. You won't find it guarding Galilee or even within the gates of Jerusalem. In fact, it's not even a building at all, but a body born of the Virgin Mary.

Yes, Holy Scripture has a castle. And that castle is Christ. When you sing, read, or pray Psalm 27, you are confessing what the Scriptures declare time and time again. Christ is our temple. Our dwelling place. Our shelter from the storm. Our safe haven. Our rock and refuge. Our strong house upon the rock. Jesus is your stronghold of salvation.

When John sees the holy city, Jerusalem above, in Revelation, there is no temple there, for the Lamb is the temple and light and life. And the Lamb of God is also Christ our Castle. And this is no fairytale kind of Castle or King. Christ, our King and Castle, spreads his Kingdom all over the kingdoms of this world, wherever his saints gather to hear and receive his Gifts in word, water, Body and Blood.

Jesus is the stronghold of your life and of his church. You're built upon and rest in the solid rock of Christ who rested on the wood of the cross and rolled the stone away for you. The pillars and timbers and arches of his church are sealed and secure by his Body and Blood.

So, when you enter the gates of the Lord's house tomorrow, dine at his table, and feast as a welcomed guest, you will sing, "The Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?" This psalm, like all the psalms ultimately, is about Jesus. Your church is his castle where he rules and reigns in grace and mercy for you. There, Jesus is your King of kings and Castle of castles. He is our mighty fortress. A bulwark never failing. Jesus is the stronghold of your life, now and forever.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Saturday of the Week of Easter

APRIL 11, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Easter 2 - Psalm 81:1, 7a, 10, 16b; antiphon: 1 Peter 2:2a
Daily Lectionary: Exodus 19:1-25; Hebrews 13:1-21

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Psalm 81:10)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day." For Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Asaph was a Levite, a member of David's court. The words of this psalm open to us the scriptures, giving us certainty of who God is, what He has done, and continues to do for His people. The people of Israel are described as stubborn, as those who do not listen or submit to God. Yet God conquers their enemies, delivers them from the land of Egypt. Despite their unfaithfulness and constant idolatry, God continues to care and deliver them. The same is true for us. We have seen all that God has done for us, and yet we still sin much and deserve nothing but God's wrath and punishment. We cannot, by our own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ as our God and Lord, or even come to Him. So God becomes the doer, the rescuer, the redeemer of us His people. God comes down, that ancient Word that gave life to all flesh, puts on human flesh. The Word made flesh comes down, begotten of His Father, born of woman, to subdue our enemies of sin, death, and the devil. He does this not with gold or silver, but with His holy and precious blood by His innocent suffering and death. What is left for us to do then? Die. That's all we can do. God sees our stubbornness, our stopped-up ears, our sin and brokenness, and He overcomes them. His holy Law adjusts our stiff necks, and opens our ears, it kills our sinfulness, our very broken bodies, and kills all free will and go-getter attitude we might bring to the table. All we can do in history towards God is die. That's exactly what God does. He comes, and He dies to the Law in our place, bearing our sin that He might raise us the dead up and declare us His holy people. There's nothing we contribute. We die to sin, and are raised to new life. This is a daily reality we live in, that we would remember the God who brought His people out of Egypt, who fed them, and delivered them. God does the same for us. He does the redeeming, the saving, the life-giving, the absolving. We die to sin in our baptisms daily, and emerge in the daily resurrection to receive our daily bread. That we might receive the bread of life to fill us with the life that we will know fully on the Last Day. We are stubborn and unworthy, so we do all we can do is die. Yet united to our Lord and Savior Jesus, who came down, bore the cross, and rose again. We too shall rise.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Help us to serve you evermore with hearts both pure and lowly; and may your Word, that light divine, shine on in splendor holy that we repentance show, in faith ever grow; the pow'r of sin destroy and evils that annoy. O make us faithful Christians. (LSB 647:3)

Second Sunday of Easter

APRIL 12, 2026

Today's Reading: John 20:19-31

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

"but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The eleven have seen the Lord. Thomas doubted, witnessed, confessed, and believed. Peace be with you, the disciples are ordained into ministry, the crucified and risen Word made flesh breathes on them the Holy Spirit. That Holy breath that gives life to God's creation.

The ministry these eleven disciples will enter in is not about being a good person or making sure everyone goes along to get along. This ministry will deal with life and death. So Jesus breathes on them and charges them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." Men, sent by God in His place to forgive sins. That's the ministry these disciples would enter into.

They would not be alone. God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit would be with them and with the church. God the Father would care for them as He always has, God the Son would intercede at His right hand, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, would proceed from the Father and the Son to point the bride, the church, to her Bridegroom, Christ Jesus. That by the marks from His hands and His side, she would be made whole to endure all the world throws at her.

Those disciples saw and bore witness, Thomas doubted, witnessed His resurrected Lord and His God, and believed. Blessed are you who have not seen and yet have believed, as our Lord says. Who have received the Holy Spirit in the waters of your Baptism, who have been united to the one whom they have pierced, with nails and spear, and are nourished with the blood that flowed from His very side and strengthened by His body, given and shed for you. For the forgiveness of sins.

Of course, Jesus did many other signs that are not written by John, but these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him you may have life in His Name. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, grant that we who have celebrated the Lord's resurrection may by Your grace confess in our life and conversation that Jesus is Lord and God; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for the Second Sunday of Easter)

Friday of the Sixth Week of Easter

MAY 15, 2026

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

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 11:24-29; 12:1-16; Luke 17:20-37

Our Father who art in heaven. What does this mean? With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father. (Lord's Prayer - Introduction and Explanation)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

There are certain words that, by definition, tell you something about someone's relationship with others around them. Teachers need students, and students need teachers. The coach needs players, and players need a coach. The naval captain needs a crew, and the crew needs a captain. The pastor needs people, and God's people need a pastor. You get the idea.

Something similar is happening when we pray the Lord's Prayer.

One of the blessings Jesus gives us at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer is these words, "Our Father." These are foundational, relationship-defining words and promises. "Our Father." Just two words into the prayer, not even finished with the introduction, and God has already told us something important. "I am your Father. You are my children. I am the giver of all good things. You are the receiver of my grace and goodness. I, and I alone, define who you are. You belong to me. Your sins are paid for by the blood of my Son. You are saved by his cross. You are called, gathered, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Your faith and life are in my good and gracious hands."

And this is good news, because the sad reality is that sometimes earthly fathers fail miserably. Tragically, there are earthly fathers who abandon, abuse, or afflict their children. And the truth is, that all fathers, even the best ones, are still sinners in need of a perfect, loving, gracious heavenly father. And they're not alone in that. We all are.

This is one of the reasons Jesus starts the prayer this way: "Our Father." God the Father's love will not fail you. His grace towards you will never end. He won't walk out on you, hurt, or harm you. He promises never to leave you nor forsake you. His love and mercy and grace towards you are as he is, eternal, without end, wider than the widest ocean, and taller than the highest mountain. And should you ever doubt or despair of your Heavenly Father's love for you, you need look no further than the cross, where he sent His Son, His only Son, to die for you. And, that same Son, Jesus, gives you the joy and privilege of praying alongside him those words of promise, peace, and presence. Our Father.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Our Father who from heav'n above Bids all of us to live in love As members of one family And pray to You in unity, Teach us no thoughtless words to say But from our inmost hearts to pray. (LSB 766:1)

Ascension Day

MAY 14, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 16:14-20 or Luke 24:44-53

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 11:1-23, 31-35; Luke 17:1-19

"And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven." (Luke 24:50-51)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

If your hands could talk, what story would they tell? They might tell a story of aching, cramping pain after taking a long test. Perhaps they would tell a story filled with warmth and joy around a campfire with family or friends. Or maybe they tell a love story as husband and wife walk hand in hand. But what about Jesus? If his hands could talk, what story would they tell? Thankfully, we don't have to wonder. Jesus' holy, precious palms tell the story of his promises made and kept for you. The story of your salvation is written by and in the holy hands of Jesus.

After all, he who fashioned and formed Adam out of the dust of the earth also was incarnate of the Virgin Mary. He is flesh of our flesh. Bone of our bone. Hand of our hand, yet without the blackspot of sin-stained hands.

He who fearfully and wonderfully formed you in your mother's womb - hands and all - also wriggled and wiggled his infant hands as Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. He who painted the starry skies above and made the earth his canvas also reached out his hands to cleanse, heal, and raise from the dead. He who spread out his hands in the wilderness and rained down manna and quail from heaven also broke bread on the hillside and in the Upper Room.

He who inhabits the heavenly and holy temple built without hands, also inhabits and takes on human flesh, hands and all. Jesus' hands reached out in blessing. Jesus' hands took bread and broke it, and gave it, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body." Jesus' hands lifted a cup and said, "Take, drink; this is my blood." Jesus' hands prayed in Gethsemane. Shook at the violence of Good Friday. Were driven through by nails. Blood poured from his hands. Life left his hands. The darkness of the tomb covered his hands. And then, his hands had more to say. A good and gracious story to tell: Peace be with you. Crucified hands for you. Scarred hands for you. Risen and glorified hands for you. And now at his ascension, Jesus raises his hands once again in blessing. For his disciples. For you.

When it comes to Jesus' hands, he has a gracious grip on you. A holy hold on your life. Indeed, he's got the whole world - including you - in his pierced hands.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Be now our joy on earth, O Lord, And be our future great reward. Alleluia, alleluia! Then, throned with You forever, we Shall praise Your name eternally. Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! (LSB 493:5)

Monday of the Second Week of Easter

APRIL 13, 2026

Today's Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

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

"Then he said to me, 'Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.'" (Ezekiel 37:4)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

We cannot imagine the horror Ezekiel felt in the valley of dry bones. God dropped Ezekiel there in that valley of despair, well past being clean among all that death. Ezekiel followed God, listened, and proclaimed the Word of God to those dry bones.

Jesus still does this today.

He takes a son of man and drops him where the church has called him to serve. Some in the valley, some on a mountain or hilltop, some in the city, suburbs, or country. Different scenery, yet as the son of man is led around, he notices all the dead, dry bones. In fact, he feels this dryness in his own bones as he dwells among them.

This son of man, horrified at the death within him and with the death witnessed around him, is led by God to care for and serve those who are at that place. These sons of men are God's pastors and preachers, just like Ezekiel, and they listen and proclaim the Word of God to those dry bones.

"The Lord says...so I prophesied as I was commanded." The preachers see bone to its bone, and flesh and skin come upon them. Word preached, water poured, Body and Blood given under bread and wine. Breath prophesied, and the breath came into them, and they lived.

The son of man God sent into that valley of dry bones does this work week in and week out, that God would raise these dry bones and strengthen them to stand and live according to the Word of their God, who gives them breath and life. This is the life of the church. This is your life, how God kills and makes alive. God preaches through His man called to you, and through that proclamation, through the Gospel joined to simple means, you have life and salvation. "And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Alleluia, alleluia! Oh, to breathe the Spirit's grace! Alleluia, alleluia! Oh, to see the Father's face! Alleluia, alleluia! Oh, to feel the Son's embrace! (LSB 491:4)

Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter

APRIL 14, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 John 5:4-10

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

"For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree." (1 John 5:7-8)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What testimony is this that John writes? What testimony are the three, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, in agreement? This is not concerning manifesting faith within us, or that we accept the Lord Jesus into our hearts.

Rather it is this, "The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul write: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me." In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

The Spirit points to the One who died, whose side poured out water and blood that brings life for all who receive them. You receive this life-giving testimony in your Baptism and are given a new identity through the washing of the water and the Word. In Baptism, you receive the Holy Spirit, who brings you who were dead to faith in the testimony concerning your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Through water and the Spirit, you are given new life and a Savior who is with you through all weakness, pain, and even death. There with you, leading you from this life, through death, to eternity.

He gives you His Body and Blood, which is given to you through His Word, and bread and wine. To strengthen and keep you all the days of your life. That's what these three are for. Because it is not by your reason or strength that you are saved, that you have faith, or that you endure. Rather, it is by these three that unite you to the One who endured and has overcome death and the grave, and so shall you. These three testify, and these three agree. By them, you are united with your Lord Jesus now, and just as He died and rose again, so will you. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Water, blood, and Spirit crying, By their witness testifying To the One whose death-defying Life has come, with life for all. (LSB 597:1)

Wednesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

MAY 13, 2026

Today's Reading: Numbers 10:11-36

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 10:11-36; Luke 16:19-31

"And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, 'Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.' And when it rested, he said, 'Return, O Lord, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel.'" (Numbers 10:35-36)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

In the Scriptures, God is locatable. Not the way you type a location into Google Maps. And it's not like you can slap an Apple AirTag on him or open the "find my phone" app to see where he's roaming. Nevertheless, in the Scriptures, God is findable. God locates himself. God dwells with his people. In the pillar of fire and smoke. In the tabernacle. Upon the ark. There, he's enthroned between the cherubim. There he's present with and for his people.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel spent a lot of time searching for God's presence and peace in all the wrong places—back in Egypt in slavery, in the golden calf in the wilderness, in the idols of Baal and the Asherah, or any other number of pseudo, self-made deities they foolishly put their trust in. The truth is, God is not hard to find. All you have to do is look where he promises to be, and where he promises to dwell, and where he declares that he is present with and for his people. In the Old Testament, God wasn't hard to find. He was in his house, the tabernacle, and later the temple. He was in his word and promise. He was in the sacrifices and the blood and the smoke and the fire for his people.

In the New Testament, once again, God is locatable. He is born of the Virgin Mary. He is findable for he took on human flesh. God dwells with his people as one of his people, first in Mary's womb, then on the cross and in the tomb, and out alive again three days later.

Sadly, like Israel, we spend a lot of time searching for God's presence and peace in all the wrong places: our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Our selfish loves, lusts, and longings for peace and joy apart from Christ. But thankfully, God is still locatable. Findable. He dwells with you and for you. No longer on the ark or in the pillar of smoke and fire. But on the altar. Enthroned between the flaming candles, seated in the bread and wine for you. Jesus dwells with you and for you, setting up a watery tabernacle of his own where he sends the Holy Spirit to dwell with you. Jesus is present with all of his promises for you in holy words, holy Baptism, and holy Communion.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Sing praise to the God of Israel! Sing praise for His visitation! Redeeming his people from their sin, Accomplishing their salvation, Upraising a mighty horn within The house of his servant David. (LSB 936:1)

Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

MAY 12, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-6 or James 1:22-27

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 9:1-23; Luke 16:1-18

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time." (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

In Genesis 18, Abraham made intercession to Yahweh. He petitioned God for the sake of the righteous (that is, believing in Yahweh's promises) people in Sodom. Abraham pleaded God down from fifty to ten. Only Abraham and his family, Lot and his family (well, minus his salty-pillared wife) made it out of Sodom before its destruction. Another mediator was needed. In Exodus and Leviticus, Yahweh instructed Moses and Aaron to consecrate a priesthood and construct the tabernacle. The priests and the place they served in were to be a place of intercession, redemption, atonement, and mediation. Sins were confessed. Sacrifices were slain. Blood was poured out. Day after day. Holy feast after holy feast. Year after year. These servants and the sacrifices were good. They did what God gave them to do. But the priests were far from perfect. And the sacrificial system was one of wash, rinse, and repeat. Another mediator was needed. In Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, Moses pleaded and interceded on behalf of Israel numerous times when they failed, faltered, and were faithless in the wilderness. But so did Moses. He failed, faltered, and was faithless, too. He fell into the same infidelities of faith that Israel did. Moses, like so many of his generation, died in the wilderness before crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land. Once again, another mediator was needed.

So, in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son. Jesus is the One Mediator who redeems them all. Abraham, Aaron, and Moses were all small "m" mediators, each pointing the way to and paving the way for the capital "M" Mediator, Jesus. God's final mediator is God himself. Jesus is the best of both worlds. True God. True Man. Bearing Adam's humanity, yet without Adam's sin. Jesus is the go-between, reconciling us to God the Father. Jesus is our mediator bearing mercy and steadfast love. Jesus is our redeemer who pays our ransom with his holy, precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. And Jesus did this for Abraham, Aaron, Moses, and for you. In Jesus, you have the One Mediator who is perfect, eternal, everlasting, never-ending, always present, ever-gracious, and abounding in steadfast love for you. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Since Christ has full atonement made And brought to us salvation, Each Christian therefore may be glad And build on this foundation. Your grace alone, dear Lord, I plead, Your death is now my life indeed, for You have paid my ransom. (LSB 555:6)

Wednesday of the Second Week of Easter

APRIL 15, 2026

Today's Reading: Exodus 24:1-18

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

"And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.'" (Exodus 24:8)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Why talk about the blood of the covenant during Easter? That's how the people of Israel could approach God. They were sinners, and God is holy. God cannot dwell where unholy sin is. So He instructed Moses to cover them in the blood of the covenant that their sins would be covered. And all God's people said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." Amen.

The sacrifice must not have taken. Those sinners did not do all that the Lord has spoken, and they were not obedient. Neither have we. We deal with the same rebellious streak that the people of Israel did. God is still holy, and we are still sinners. God cannot dwell where unholy sin is.

So God provides the sacrifice, His Son, His only Son, whom He loved, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus takes the sins of our sinful, rebellious idolatry, becomes that sinful rebellious idolatry, and covers them in His blood of the New covenant poured out on the cross as the once and final sacrifice. The people of Israel received the blood, heard the words and promises of God, and, while imperfectly trusting in them, God is merciful. He forgives, He gives life, and He saves them from themselves, their enemies, death, all of it. God does it all by the blood, and proclaims in the life-giving promise of the One who would shed His blood for the sins of the whole world.

The Blood of Jesus satisfies the Law's demands, and God's wrath dies with Jesus the crucified. Where all sin dies. God raises His Son from the dead, bearing the marks of His once for all sacrifice that all would believe and be made sons and daughters of the King who took His throne of the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven to His Father's right hand. That His blood would be on us and all the people, and that by it we would have life in the One who died.

Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Sin, disturb my soul no longer: I am baptized into Christ! I have comfort even stronger: Jesus' cleansing sacrifice. Should a guilty conscience seize me Since my Baptism did release me In a dear forgiving flood, Sprinkling me with Jesus' blood? (LSB 594:2)

Thursday of the Second Week of Easter

APRIL 16, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Creed First Article

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 25:1-22; Exodus 25:23-30:38; Luke 5:17-39

"All this He does only out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me." (Luther's Explanation of the First Article of the Apostles Creed)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

God does all of it. ALL OF IT. Only out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.

Stop trying to take the workload from Him. He's got the whole world in His hands. He gives daily bread to everyone, yes, even to all evil people. He sent His Son to be God and man that we would be like God. There's nothing you could give to God, or complete for God, that would even compare.

The problem is that we give half-heartedly, and our merit is worthless. Our mercy is half-hearted and short-term, and goodness is brief.

God gives all that we need to support this body and life. All of it. God is the giver, and the doer, and the fulfiller because he knows that we cannot give, and do, what He desires. God is the merciful Father who makes up for our fathers' failings, and our own. We don't deserve Him, and He doesn't deserve us.

Yet He sends His Son to die for us poor, miserable sinners, without any merit or worthiness in me.

Thanks be to God that He does all of it. ALL OF IT. His Fatherly divine goodness and mercy is revealed in His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. He is my heavenly Father, and I am His dear child. Remember this, dear baptized child of God. You are His, and He will not leave you, nor forsake you. He has done everything for your good that you would know you have a merciful God, a Father in heaven, a Son who saved you, and the Spirit who comforts you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

We all believe in one true God, Who created earth and heaven, The Father, who to us in love Has the right of children given. He in soul and body feeds us; All we need His hand provides us; Through all snares and perils leads us, Watching that no harm betide us. He cares for us by day and night; All things are governed by His might. (LSB 954:1)

Monday of the Sixth Week of Easter

MAY 11, 2026

Today's Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 8:5-26; Luke 15:11-32

"And the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.' So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live." (Numbers 21:8-9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Snakes usually have a bad reputation. And for good reason. The Slytherin house in Harry Potter is famous for dark wizards. Medusa, with her serpentine hairstyle and stone-cold stare, isn't exactly the woman that little girls long to be when they grow up.

It's no different in the true story of the Scriptures. There's the serpent, the ancient dragon, Satan, back in Genesis, who tempted Adam and Eve with his craftiness, cunning, and calumny. The Lord tells Jeremiah to preach to Israel, but warns that he's sending him among serpents that cannot be tamed. Jesus admonishes the Pharisees that in their hissing fits of self-righteousness, they're a brood of vipers. And just like it did with our first parents, Adam and Eve, Satan's lies, alone with sin's poison, came creeping and crawling, slithering and sliding, into the hearts and out of the mouths of Israel in the wilderness. "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food."

So what did God do? Tell them to pound sand right back into slavery? No. He did what he does throughout Scripture. He brought punishment, yes, but also promise. Warning, but also a way of rescue. Judgment, but also a sign of justification. Those fiery serpents were instruments of God's work of repentance and restoration.

And then, the Lord took the serpent, a sign of temptation, evil, sin, and death, and turned it into a sign of salvation, goodness, righteousness, and life. Moses made a bronze serpent. Set it on a pole for all to see. And anyone who looked at it lived.

This isn't the last time God takes a sign of sin, suffering, and death and turns it into a sign of salvation, reconciliation, and life. Only this time, it wasn't in the wilderness, but on a hilltop outside Jerusalem. And it wasn't a pole, but a wooden cross. And it wasn't a bronze serpent, but the Lord himself in the flesh. Jesus died for you. Defeated the Serpent at his own game. For just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Your cross I place before me; It's saving power restore me, Sustain me in the test. It will, when life is ending, Be guiding and attending My way to Your eternal rest. (LSB 453:7)

Sixth Sunday of Easter

MAY 10, 2026

Today's Reading: John 16:23-30 (31-33)

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 3:1-16, 39-48; Numbers 4:1-8:4; Luke 14:25-15:10

"The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. 'So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.'" (Numbers 6:22-27)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

There was an unwritten code in my college dorm room kitchen. If you didn't want someone absconding with your leftover microwave pizza or swiping those tasty homemade cookies mom sent you, you had better put your name on it. The name was a signal to my roommates. "This is mine. This belongs to me. This is something important and precious to me. Step away from the pizza!" Something similar, though in a far greater and gracious way, is happening when the Lord instructs Moses to declare to Aaron and his sons His words of blessing. We call it the Aaronic Benediction because it was given by God to Moses. And from Moses to Aaron. And from Aaron to his sons, the priests of Israel. And from the priests to the people of Israel. This benediction is more than a greeting, like sending someone a "get well" card or shooting off a quick text to your friend when they're sick: "Feel better, bro!"

No. This is far better. For what the Lord says, he gives. What he promises, he delivers. When he tells Moses and Aaron to speak these words, his people are blessed as they hear them. The Lord's words bring His blessing, grace, and peace even while they're being spoken. You see, when our Lord wants to preserve, protect, and bring his promise to someone or something, He puts his name on it. The words and promises of this benediction are the Lord's way of sending a signal to Moses, Aaron, to all Israel, and to you. Our Lord poured his liquid benediction over you on the day of your Baptism. By water, word, and the Spirit, God placed his Holy Triune name upon you. And now, whenever you hear these words of benediction, the Lord says to you what he said to Israel: "You are mine. You belong to me. You are important and precious and beloved in my sight. You are holy. And you have my word and my name to back it up." "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

I the Lord will bless you and keep you And give you peace; I the Lord will smile upon you And give you peace: I the Lord will be your Father, Savior, Comforter, and Brother. Go, My children; I will keep you And give you peace. (LSB 922:4)

Friday of the Second Week of Easter

APRIL 17, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 6:1-19

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

"And Jesus said to them, 'I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?'" (Luke 6:9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus takes them to task. The scribes and the Pharisees throw the Law in His face; they try to catch the One whom the very words concern that they might accuse Him. When you try to trap God with the Law, you will only leave withered and defeated.

The scribes and Pharisees leave angered. The man with a withered hand leaves restored.

Jesus restores the fallen creation. This being revealed in the withered man's hand. Jesus isn't a savior of symbolic brokenness or object lessons. He's the savior of sinners, who cannot save themselves. Jesus confronts the Pharisees with the law, challenging them to face the reality that they cannot save themselves according to it. They hardened themselves against Him and sought to find a way to deal with Jesus even more.

The man with a withered hand comes as he is. No way to hide his suffering. He goes to where God's word is read, and where the One who is the fulfillment of that word happens to be.

Go to where God has promised to be. In His Word preached, for you. Church is where we who are broken by the Law come before God, not seeking to trap Him to our demands or convince Him we've done our best. It is where we lay ourselves bare and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Through absolutions proclaimed, sermons preached, water poured, and bread and wine distributed, the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given for you. The God of sinners restores them, heals them, binds them to Himself in His Son Jesus, and the means He initiated to call, gather, and enlighten you to saving faith, and keep you in the one true faith until He comes again.

No tricks or traps with Jesus. He heals your diseases, binds your wounds, and forgives your sins. Thanks be to God, He has died, He has risen, and will come again.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Saturday of the Second Week of Easter

APRIL 18, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Easter 3 - Psalm 33:1, 18-20; antiphon: Psalm 33:5b, 6a
Daily Lectionary: Exodus 32:1-14; Luke 6:20-38

"Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love," (Psalm 33:18)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! Alleluia! "Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts."

The Lord looks down from heaven. He has visited His people, and He has seen your struggles, and heard your cries. He is not a God who watches, but a God who steps in and cares for His creation. Our prayer is that God would continue to bring His enemies to nothing.

The Psalmist's petitions are heard and answered by God, and our prayers are heard and answered also. In the beginning God spoke, and it came to be. God came down from heaven and visited His people. God is not absent from creation. He hears you, and His eyes are upon you. You are one whom God the Father created in His image. One whom God the Son, Jesus, died and redeemed by His blood. You are a new creation of water and the Spirit in your Baptism.

We endure the days and times of this life because God has conquered His enemies, and our enemies we have only for a time. We wait for the Lord. We call upon His Name, which He has revealed to us. He is our help and our shield. Let your heart be glad in Him. You can trust in His holy Name. "Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Christ, who shared our mortal life And ended death's long reign, Who healed the sick and raised the dead And bore our grief and pain: We know our years on earth are few, That death is always near. Come now to us, O Lord of Life; Bring hope that conquers fear! (LSB 552:1)

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Easter

MAY 9, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Easter 6 - Psalm 66:1-2a, 17, 19-20; antiphon: Isaiah 48:20b
Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 26:21-33, 39-44; Numbers 1:1-2:34; Luke 14:1-24

"Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!" (Psalm 66:20)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen. Our God is a God who wants to hear our prayers. The psalmist confesses his iniquity and knows that his heart has turned from God. Even in the darkest times, God has heard his cries for help and pleas for mercy. It is not God that is far off; rather, it is man who has abandoned God in his sin. He has turned his back on God and sought after the desires of his sinful heart.

In this world, the attacks from sin, satan, and the world are relentless. The temptation to follow our own desires of the flesh is always before us. Satan does not take a day off or the world a vacation when it comes to pulling us away from the one true God. In sin we seek after the lusts of the flesh. In sin, we want to work out our problems on our own. We rationalize God to be far off and out of touch with the realities that confront us. We meditate on our own wishes and reason our own solutions to the struggles that confront us.

God has not abandoned us. He has not forsaken us. Our God is a God of mercy and compassion. He is a God who desires our prayers. He wants nothing more than for us to lift our prayers and petitions to Him. He hears our prayers. As the Psalmist writes, "...He has not rejected my prayer or removed His steadfast love from me." In humility and humbleness, we petition our Father that His will may be done through us. He shapes and forms us as the potter shapes the clay. We are His vessels to serve in the vocations that He has equipped us for from before the foundations of the world.

As we journey towards the end of the Easter season, we are comforted by the words of the Psalmist in knowing that our Father in Heaven always hears our prayers. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are pointed back to our Baptism where we are marked with His word and water. We are drawn to the Communion rail where He feeds us with His healing balm of His Body and Blood. In His Holy Word, the Savior is revealed, and the message of forgiveness is placed upon our ears. In faith, we lift up our prayers to an ever-loving God who does not reject our prayers.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

To God the Holy Spirit let us pray For the true faith needed on our way That He may defend us when life is ending And from exile home we are wending. Lord have mercy (LSB 768:1)

Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter

MAY 8, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 13:29-30

Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 26:1-20; Luke 13:18-35

"...And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."(Luke 13:29-30)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen. Jesus teaches His hearers that in Him salvation is for the world. The mindset of the first-century Jew was that salvation was on account of their lineage. The appeal of the church leadership was to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for their assurance that God would save them. The idea that salvation would be for the Gentile was folly to the Jew. The teaching that the message of salvation was for the world was foreign to the Pharisees and the church leadership. The Messiah was for the Jews to free them from a tyrannical and oppressive foreign government.

Jesus flips the narrative that was being taught upside down. A teaching that the first would be last and the last first did not agree with the current leadership. Jesus was chastised for the people He called as His disciples. The individuals who benefited from His miracles were from all walks of life. He sat with sinners and tax collectors. He proclaimed comfort and hope to the destitute. He healed the blind, the deaf, and the mute. The outcast, the beggar, the half-breed Samaritans, He healed and restored them. His message was contrary to the message that the Pharisees had been teaching. He brought a message of forgiveness and mercy.

Our world today advocates for self-reliance. We are to seek out our own desires and fulfill those desires regardless of whether they are contrary to the Scriptures. The message of the Scripture is still contrary to what the world would have us believe. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is offensive to the world. The world says to rely on yourself, fulfill your wants, and serve yourself. Christ's message is a message of repentance and forgiveness. The Savior has come into this world and paid the price for your sins. He has fulfilled the law on your behalf. You are set free to live in your Baptism. He did not look at your last name or who your parents are. He did not look at your history or where you are from ethnically. God has called you out of His unfathomable love for you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Today Your mercy calls us To wash away our sin However great our trespass,
Whatever we have been However long from mercy Our hearts have turned away,
Your precious blood can wash us And make us clean today. (LSB 915:1)*

Third Sunday of Easter

APRIL 19, 2026

Today's Reading: John 10:11-16

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 32:15-35; Luke 6:39-49

"I am the Good Shepherd." (John 10:11a)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Sheep need a shepherd. Sheep depend on a shepherd who will lead, provide, and protect. Otherwise, sheep wander, get lost, and in their lostness can be easy prey for the wolves.

Isaiah says: "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way," (53:6). It is as if we were in a race to see who could rebel and sprint from God the fastest! Green pastures? Still waters? Soul restoration? Righteous paths? Guiding presence in the very deep shadow of death? Comforting rod and staff? A banquet table? A divine home? No thanks! We will go it alone! We will be independent and self-sustaining. We will follow every false path. We will chase down every poisoned weed and lap up every polluted puddle.

And to top it off, we will put ourselves under a hired hand, who doesn't give a farthing about us. He will let us do anything that floats our boats. And we won't even notice the hireling as he hightails it as the wolf creeps, snarls, and attacks. This scenario of sheep insisting on their own waywardness will not end well. It will end hellishly! Damnationally!

So it is time to repent. Turn from such sinful straying. Turn from going our own independent way. And then be turned to THE GOOD SHEPHERD – the Lord Jesus Christ in faith who does what it takes to salvationally find and rescue us, His wandering sheep, so that we will be totally dependent on Him. Why? Because "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep ... I lay down my life for the sheep." He is preaching His Good-Friday-on-the-cross death. This is the only death that atones for all sin, including yours.

Here is the bottom line. Your salvation as a sheep all boils down to dependency. Or to put it quite bluntly: you cannot save yourself, no matter how hard you try. You need THE GOOD SHEPHERD, Jesus, the Bishop of our souls (1 Peter 3:25), who laid down His life into death – His Good Friday death on the cross FOR YOU. Dependent on Good Shepherd Jesus, we listen to His voice that categorically proclaims: "I died and rose FOR YOU. At My Table, I give you My Body and Blood, and I promise all your sin is forgiven. You're in my flock. I've got you." To which faith-full sheep say: "Amen. Thank you. Thank you, Jesus!"

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us Your Holy Spirit that when we hear the voice of our Shepherd we may know Him who call us each by name and follow where He leads; through the same 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 of Easter

APRIL 20, 2026

Today's Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 33:1-23; Luke 7:1-17

"I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep." (Ezekiel 34:15a)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Shepherds. Israel's history is full of them: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When Jacob moved his family to Egypt, they were segregated to Goshen because Hebrew shepherds were considered an abomination to the Egyptians (Genesis 46:34; cf. 43:32). Moses and David were shepherds (Exodus 3:1; 1 Sam 17:34-36). Joshua would shepherd Israel so that "the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd" (Numbers 27:17; cf. 1 Kings 22:17; Ezekiel 34:5). Additionally, the prophets, particularly Ezekiel, speak of Israel's kings as shepherds. Most of these king-shepherds abused the flock. King Ahab was one of the worst in the Northern Kingdom, and Manasseh was one of the worst in the Southern Kingdom. The children of Israel were like sheep without a shepherd. These king-shepherds did not strengthen, heal, and bind up the weak and sick. Instead, they ruthlessly subjected them. Preyed on them. Exposed them to wild beasts. Ezekiel correctly makes the case that Judah's shepherds consumed their flock instead of feeding it. Instead of protecting, they slaughtered. Instead of gathering, they scattered. Consequently, the LORD takes His stand. He will "destroy" and "feed" the voracious-feeding-themselves "fat and strong" unfaithful shepherds "in justice." They will get what they want as their punishment for their stubborn unbelief, corruption, and unrepentance. In addition, the LORD Himself promises to do what Israel's predatory shepherds will not and cannot do. He will be Israel's shepherd. "I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out ... I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep." He will rescue and gather the scattered. He will "feed them with good pasture" – even on the mountain heights. He will "seek the lost ... bring back the strayed ... bind up the injured, and ... strengthen the weak." Connect the dots. Ezekiel 34 is to the Old Testament what John 10 and Luke 15:3-7 are to the New Testament. Jesus— Immanuel / God with us— is the Good Shepherd of Ezekiel's prophecy! God the Father sends His only-begotten Son "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). David was both "shepherd" and "prince" of Israel. As such, David prefigures Jesus, who is the greater salvational Shepherd-King! So, when Jesus identifies Himself as "the good shepherd," He categorically proclaims Himself as the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. And in Good Friday sacrificial love for you, His sheep, He "lays down his life" (Jn 10:15) and then takes it up again on Easter Sunday (Jn 10:17-18) to win your salvation by His blood as the sacrificial lamb who "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Good Shepherd Jesus, continue to shepherd and pasture us in Your kingdom as we live in and from our Baptism as You repent, faith, and lead us in Your Word. Amen.

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter

MAY 7, 2026

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

Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 24:1-23; Leviticus 25:1-55; Luke 12:54-13:17

The Second Petition. Thy Kingdom come. What does this mean? The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God's kingdom come? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen. As Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, they are reminded that the kingdom of God is not merely a location here on earth or some existential place that is beyond our understanding. The kingdom of God is present in Christ. John the Baptist proclaimed, "The kingdom of God is at hand," when Christ was at the Jordan River. In Christ is also the reign of God. We say that in Christ is the "kingdoming" of God. He is the rule and reign of all things.

As we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come," we are reminded that the rule and reign of Christ is taking place right now. His reign is not something we are waiting to take place. Luther defines that the Kingdom of God comes through the Holy Spirit, when, by His grace, we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here and in eternity. In the life of the church and her people, there is the kingdom of God. When we receive the true Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament, His kingdom is at hand. Christ comes to us for the strengthening of faith and the forgiveness of sins. As the Holy Spirit lives and dwells within us, we are sent out into the world to lead holy lives reflective of our Baptism.

The world would like us to believe that the only kingdom is the kingdom here on earth. Our culture insists that there is nothing beyond this world and that there is nothing other than this world. We are encouraged to live lives that feed our flesh and our desires. The world, sin, and satan say that we are in charge of our own destiny. Scriptures teach otherwise. Scriptures point us through the lies of the world and point us to Christ and His kingdom. Scriptures point us to the work of Christ, and in those works is His "kingdoming." He has fulfilled the law on our behalf. He has paid the price for our sins. He has conquered death. He reigns now and for all eternity. In His reigning we pray, "Thy Kingdom Come."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

May Christ our intercessor be And through His blood and merit Read from His book that we are free With all who life inherit. Then we shall see Him face to face, With all His saints in that blest place Which He has purchased for us. (LSB 508:6)

Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

MAY 6, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 12:35-53

Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 23:23-44; Luke 12:35-53

*“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, 36 and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.”
(Luke 12:35-36)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen. Jesus' words for the disciples were a little concerning for them. They wanted to know if these words were for them or for all the people. The “managers” are in the crosshairs of Christ's admonishment. The ones entrusted with the work of overseeing the administration of the gifts that have been given to them. The local church had abused its power by burdening the consciences of the people. The leadership continually advocated a law of salvation for the people. God's forgiveness was contingently upon the obedience to the laws made by man. The church had grown into apostasy.

The leadership failed to see themselves as servants, but rather as those who were in control and “calling the shots.” The life they advocated was not about God's unfailing mercy and forgiveness but rather about obedience to their laws. Christ saw their hardened hearts. Christ came as the suffering servant who dies on the cross and conquers death. His ministry is a ministry of servitude for His people. In His service, His people are made ready for the Master's return.

He prepares His people through the Gift of Holy Baptism. In your Baptism, you are made ready for His glorious return. Christ reminds His hearers that they know neither the day nor the hour when the master will return. He merely encourages them to be ready. You are ready in your Baptism. In your Baptism, you received the name of Jesus. In your Baptism, you received the sign of the cross both upon your forehead and upon your heart to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. You are baptized into His death, and you are baptized in His resurrection. You are dressed for the return of Christ as His robe of righteousness has been placed over you. You are ready for His return.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The gifts flow from the font Where He calls us His own; New life He gives that makes Us His and His alone. Here He forgives our sins With water and His Word; The triune God Himself Gives pow'r to call Him Lord. (LSB 602:2)

Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter

APRIL 21, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Peter 2:21-25

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 34:1-28; Luke 7:18-35

“...leaving you an example...” (1 Peter 2:21b)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Peter preaches Jesus in two ways. The first and foremost way is that Jesus, “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls,” is the SALVIFIC GIFT for you. You were like “straying sheep,” as Peter quotes Isaiah 54, but Good Shepherd Jesus “bore our sins in his body on the tree.” This is so deliciously wonderful! Jesus was completely pure and holy, and yet on the cross, He carried all your sin. He answered or atoned for it all as He sacrificially in love shed His blood FOR YOU. The blood that gushed from His crucified body is the blood that cleanses and purifies from all sin (1 John 1:7). So, your sin does not belong to you anymore. All of it and all of its hellacious punishment was reckoned to Jesus in His very good, Good Friday death. “By his [Good Friday] wounds you have been healed.” This is Peter's preaching of Jesus as GIFT for you and for your salvation. To which faith says: “Amen.” Then Peter preaches Jesus as EXAMPLE, namely, how you are to live before others, especially those who want to or actually harm you. Christians suffer for confessing Jesus as “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” It goes with the territory. So, learn how to suffer discrimination, hate, injustice, and injury from Jesus because you are a Christian. “For this you have been called,” Peter declares. Jesus suffered for you, “leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.” The Shepherd has taken the lead. Willingly, for your salvation, He marched to the cross. So, then, His sheep will follow and bear their crosses following His example. As Jesus Good Fridayly suffered, He didn't sin. He didn't argue or complain. He did not appeal to justice as He stood before the High Priest and Governor Pilate, and He “committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.” Moreover, when Jesus was reviled, He did not berate back. As He suffered, He did not say: “Just wait until I rise from the dead! I'll get you!” Instead, Jesus, “entrusted himself to him [His Father] who judges justly.” FOR YOU and for your salvation, Jesus permitted Himself to be viciously demonized, scorned, mocked, and brutally murdered. And yet He only opened His mouth to pray: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,” (Luke 23:34)! Stephen prayed that way in Acts 8:60, and Mrs. Erika Kirk recently prayed that way for the murderer of her husband Charlie: “that man, that young man, I forgive him.” So, follow Jesus' example, dear disciple. Do not argue and complain when you are wronged. Have compassion on those who hurt you. Suffer it, forgive, and leave the matter to God the Father just as Jesus did. In such living, you “die to sin and live to righteousness.”

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter

APRIL 22, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 7:36-50

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 34:29-35:21; Exodus 35:22-38:20; Luke 7:36-50

"He who is forgiven little, loves little." (Luke 7:47)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Pharisee Simon has invited Jesus to his house for a dinner party. Jesus is perhaps even the honored guest. Usually, in the ancient East, as a guest arrived, he would be given water to wash his feet, a kiss as a warm welcome (an equivalent to our handshake), and, for VIPs, olive oil for personal sprucing up. Shockingly, Jesus receives none of these kind courtesies from Simon. Or to put it this way: Simon shows no love whatsoever to Jesus. Zilch. Zero. Nada. All of a sudden, a "woman of the city, a sinner, [i.e., prostitute]" shows up. Crashes the affair. What is she doing? Plying her trade? Is she putting the moves on Jesus? It sure looks like it! Get the kids out of the room! It's about to get R-rated at Simon's house. Check it out! Tears flow from her eyes. Behind Jesus and at His feet, she washes His feet with her tears and dries them off with her hair. Then she dares to kiss Jesus' feet and anoint them with ointment from her alabaster flask! Simon, of course, is appalled. Horrified that Jesus lets this woman, a hardcore sinner, do this to Him or for Him. Simon snarls to himself: "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." Jesus picks up on Simon's thinking and tells a quick parable about two men being forgiven debts that they could not repay. One man had an enormous debt cancelled, whereas the other had a small debt forgiven. Jesus asks Simon: "Now which of them will love him more?" To which Simon begrudgingly answered, "The one that had the bigger debt cancelled." Get it? Simon has no use for Jesus as Savior for the forgiveness of sins. Simon would certainly say: "I'm not perfect, but I am certainly not like this woman!" So he showed no love for Jesus. That is precisely why Jesus tells him: "He who is forgiven little, loves little." The big-time notorious sinner, the woman, had enormous use of Jesus – FORGIVENESS, LIFE, AND SALVATION. That is why she showed and gave Jesus so much love. She wasn't trying to seduce Him. She was there giving her Savior the highest worship any sinner could give: F-A-I-T-H! Her trust in Jesus as Savior begged for His total and complete forgiveness for her sins. She who is forgiven much loves much! Jesus says so: "Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven – for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And as she believed she had. Jesus absolved her: "Your sins are forgiven.... Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, I believe in You. Forgive me. And may my love for you and for others be abundant. Amen.

Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

MAY 5, 2026

Today's Reading: James 1:16-21

Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 23:1-22; Luke 12:13-34

"Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." (James 1:16-17)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen. The epistle of James does not mince words when it comes to the life of the Christian. James makes it abundantly clear that in our sanctified lives, we live as children of God. It is no surprise that many of the reformers reluctantly went to James. Even Luther struggled with James, but Luther also knew that God's word is unchangeable.

In Exodus, God gives the promise to Moses to share with the people, "I will be your God and you will be my people." (Exodus 6:7) God declares that He is the one who is bringing them out of slavery in Egypt and into a land of freedom flowing with milk and honey. Later, when they are in the wilderness, God delivers the Decalogue and reminds them again that He is their God and they are His people. His people do not live like the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, or the Egyptians, but His people live like children of God. When the people of the Old Testament do not live like children of God, He says to them, "You are not people and I am not your God." (Hosea 1:9)

In our sinfulness, we live like the world. We indulge in the pleasures of the flesh. We feed our minds with fantasies of immorality and ungodly conduct. We seek ways to massage God's word so that we can justify our behavior or someone else's behavior. In James, the mirror of the law exposes our sin and accuses us of not being God's children. In that behavior, we are not His people, and He is not our God.

James does not leave us in despair. He reminds his hearers that all good things come from God. He writes in chapter 1:17, "...every perfect gift is from above,..." The perfect gift is a "complete" gift. The reader cannot help but connect what James writes here and what Christ says on the cross. It is "finished." It is complete. The work is done, and it has come from above. Christ has fulfilled the law for us so that we are no longer slaves under the law. We are set free to live as children of God. He is our God, and we are His people. He gives to us His holy law, and we are free to live in His holy law without fear of the world's condemnation.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

To Jesus we for refuge flee, Who from the curse has set us free, And humbly worship at His throne, Saved by His grace through faith alone. (LSB 579:3)

Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter

MAY 4, 2026

Today's Reading: Isaiah 12:1-6

Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 21:1-24; Luke 12:1-12

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." (Isaiah 12:2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen. The people of Judah were in a precarious position. They had watched the Northern Kingdom be completely destroyed by the Assyrian army. Families were separated. The places of worship had been desecrated with idols of false gods. The identity of the Northern Kingdom was gone. King Ahaz refused to listen to God through the prophet Isaiah. King Ahaz had his own plans to protect his people. Ahaz looked to the formidable army of Egypt for protection against Assyria. The very nation that God had freed His people from enslavement, Ahaz cut a deal with and went back to their historic slavemaster.

In the previous chapters, Isaiah reminds his hearers of God's attitude towards arrogance and pride. God hates the prideful nature of man. He despises the arrogance of His people and the arrogance of the pagan nations around His people. In their idolatry, they have committed adultery against God. They have had affairs with other gods and lusted after their own hearts' desires. In the worst of times, they still pursued their own hearts and their false gods.

In our sin, we fall into the trap of arrogance and pride. We see our accomplishments and what we are capable of achieving. Our electronic advancements and technological advancements give us every answer in the palm of our hands. We can find endless entertainment, both good and bad, with a few swipes of the finger. It can seem as if nothing is out of our reach.

Isaiah's words in chapter 12 speak to the remnant that was left behind. The few that remained faithful to God. The epitome of that remnant is found in Jesus Christ. Christ is Israel reduced to one. The final sacrifice, the final King, the final prophet. Christ fulfills all aspects of God's holy law. In faith, you hold fast to the promise that Christ has completed the work for your salvation. Sin, satan, and the world will work tirelessly to turn you away from the work of Christ and point you to your work. In faith, you are held fast to Christ's work and His salvation for you. He has become your salvation. He has completed the work for you. He has paid the price for your sins. He has conquered death for you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Though Satan's wrath Beset our path And worldly scorn assail us, While You are near, We shall not fear; Your strength will never fail us, Your rod and staff will keep us safe And guide our steps forever; Nor shades of death Nor hell beneath Our lives from You will sever. (LSB 714:2)

Thursday of the Third Week of Easter

APRIL 23, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Creed Second Article

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 38:21-39:8, 22-23, 27-31; Luke 8:1-21

"Jesus Is My Lord!"

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The Creed faithfully gives the biblical facts. All the historical events of Jesus' life, from "conceived by the Holy Spirit," to "from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead," come straight from the Bible. When you confess that Jesus is the Father's only Son and your Lord, what do you mean? It means that Jesus is true God and true man in one person. How do you know that? Because He is begotten of the Father from eternity (true God) and born of the Virgin Mary (true man). Jesus is the God-man. The eternal Word made flesh: Immanuel, God with us. Unlike us, Jesus is a human conceived without sin and who never sinned (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21). And the God-man Jesus, the Father's only begotten Son, is your Lord! What does that mean? It means that Jesus redeemed you, a lost and condemned person (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18). Lord Jesus is Savior Jesus. Lord Jesus redeems. From the Second Article, "we get to know," as the Large Catechism teaches, "how he [Jesus] has given himself completely to us, withholding nothing." This is salvationally huge! Christianity is all about Jesus giving Himself, His life, and His heart to you in order to save you! This is what it means that Jesus is your Lord. As Lord, He has purchased and won you from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil. When you say "Jesus is my Lord," you are saying, "Jesus is my REDEEMER." He brought me back from the devil to His Father, from death to life, and from sin to righteousness. But how did Jesus do this for you? By making a payment with silver or gold? No! He did it with His holy, precious blood and with His Good Friday innocent suffering and death (1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:21; 3:18; Hebrews 9:26). He is Lord over your sin. His Good Friday death made satisfaction for all your sin. He paid what you owed. And when He rose on Easter Sunday, He defeated death, devoured death— put death to death. This is what it means that He is your Lord! He is Lord FOR YOU and for your salvation! You belong to Lord Jesus. You trust in Him for your salvation, and as you receive the salutary benefits that He won for you in His death through His Word and Sacrament, you "live under Him in His kingdom." He lords His forgiveness over you so that you live by faith in His "everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness" and so that you too will be raised bodily on the Last Day. Lord Jesus is the first fruits of those that sleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).

What a Lord! What a Redeemer!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving yourself completely to me to be my Redeemer.

Friday of the Third Week of Easter

APRIL 24, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Easter 4 - Psalm 66:3, 5, 8-9; antiphon: Psalm 66:1-2
Daily Lectionary: Exodus 39:32-40:16; Luke 8:22-39

"Come and see what God has done." (Psalm 66:5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

King Hezekiah is the best king Judah had since David (2 Kings 18:1-3). Like David, he fights the Philistines. He expands Judah's land and he restores true worship (spelled: F-A-I-T-H) by getting rid of the "high places" forbidden in Deuteronomy 12:10-14. He smashes the Asherah pillars and crushes the bronze serpent of Moses, to which Judah burned incense (2 Kings 18:4). However, the mighty Assyrians under Sennacherib are on the move. Judah faces the same fate as the Northern Kingdom. In the "fourteenth year" of King Hezekiah (Isaiah 36:1 – a clue that suggests the events of Isaiah 36-39 are similar to Passover – see Leviticus 23:5), the Assyrians taunt the Jerusalemites by contending that they should not expect Hezekiah or the LORD to save them. Why? Because no gods have been able to stand against Assyria! Sounds like Pharaoh, "Who is the LORD?" (Exodus 5:2). Hezekiah takes the derisive letter into the temple and spreads it before the LORD. He asks God to hear the Assyrian blasphemies Assyrians and defend Himself. "So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone," (2 Kings 19:19; also Isaiah 36:18-20; 37:1-10). The LORD humbles the gods of Assyria (Isaiah 37:21-29) just as He did with the gods of Egypt (Exodus 12:12). The "angel of death" passes through the Assyrian camp by night and slaughters 185,000 of them (Isaiah 37:36; cf. Exodus 12:23). Isaiah 38 tells the story of Hezekiah's illness and recovery. Hezekiah offers a psalm of thanksgiving (38:19-20). The "angel of death" slaughtered the Assyrians but passed over Hezekiah. In a sense, Judah has experienced a new Passover or a Passover 2.0 with the angel of death delivering her – this time from the Assyrians. No wonder Psalm 66, first written because of what we have just reviewed, exhorts the people of the Old Testament or any Christian to "come and see what God has done." And to give "him glorious praise." King Hezekiah sure did! We pray this psalm in response to the greater exodus (Luke 9:31) that the LORD Jesus did for us and for our salvation when He suffered (including all the mockery), died, and rose on the third day. He crushed the enemy Satan's head. He achieved and accomplished our salvation through the shedding of His blood from His crucified body. On the night when He was betrayed, during the context of a Passover meal, Jesus instituted His Supper, by which He gives us His crucified, risen, and ascended Body and Blood to eat and drink, with the promise that all our sins are forgiven (Matthew 26:26-28). Jesus is God FOR YOU! In the Lord's Supper, "come and see what God has done for you" and gives you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

LORD Jesus Christ. Thank you for saving me on the cross. I trust You. Amen.

Fifth Sunday of Easter

MAY 3, 2026

Today's Reading: John 16:5-15
Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 20:1-16, 22-27; Luke 11:37-54

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." (John 16:7)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen. Jesus' words to the disciples are incongruent with their thoughts about the role of the Messiah. In their minds, the Messiah was to come and free them from the bondage and rule of a tyrannical government. The children of God were to reclaim the glory days of David and Solomon. Now they hear these words of departure and preparation for the helper, the paraclete, to come. The words of Christ are not words of comfort in the ears of the disciples.

We are on a journey through the season of Easter, and as we traverse the Easter season, we are being made ready for the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The day of Pentecost is quickly approaching. The tongues of fire rest upon the disciples of Christ, and the Good News of salvation is spoken and heard in the native language of the hearers. The message of salvation for mankind is for everyone.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit does not mean that Christ is no longer with us. Many denominations teach that Christ is "only" at the right hand of God the Father. Churches across our country advocate that if you want to have a real relationship with Jesus, you need to "experience" Him. Experiential language is not the language of the Scriptures. The Scriptures teach that our Savior comes to us in the blessed Sacrament of the Altar. He comes to us as we receive His true body and true blood in the bread and the wine. In the sacrament, our sins are forgiven. In the sacrament, our faith is strengthened. We are sent out, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, to serve our neighbors in our vocations where we proclaim the death and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Saturday of the Fourth Week of Easter

MAY 2, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Easter 5 - Psalm 98:1b, 3-4; antiphon: Psalm 98:1a, 2b
Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 19:9-18, 26-37; Luke 11:14-36

"Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations." (Psalm 98:1-2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The book of Psalms is sometimes known as the hymnal of the Scriptures. And for good reason. There are one hundred and fifty psalms, or songs, given by our Lord, the Maestro of mercy, for us to pray, sing, study, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Psalm 98, which will be sung tomorrow in the Lord's house, is a beautiful example of how the Holy Scriptures sing the story of salvation. But it's not just in the Psalms. You'll find the story of salvation sung throughout the Scriptures. God's word rings out in harmony and blends its many voices to the tune of his steadfast love. From Genesis to Revelation, God's word echoes with the joyous songs of Yahweh's salvation. Everywhere you find God saving his people, you'll find them singing the songs of salvation. When Israel walked through the Red Sea, and Pharaoh's armies were buried in a liquid grave, they sang. "I will sing unto the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously, his horse and rider he has thrown into the sea." When Isaiah foretold the coming Servant of Yahweh who would suffer in our place, he sang the Servant Songs that fill his prophetic book with a foretaste of the cross to come. "For by his wounds we are healed." When Elizabeth and Mary met, and John leapt in the womb for joy that Jesus had come at last in the flesh, Mary sang the Magnificat. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior." When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the donkey brayed, and the crowds sang, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." And when John lets us peek into the angelic choir loft of heaven, guess what the saints, angels, and archangels are doing? That's right. Singing a new song, which is also an ancient song. "Worthy are you...for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God." So when you go to Divine Service tomorrow morning and sing the psalms, hymns, and liturgy, there might be ten people in church, or two hundred. But no matter how many people are gathered, you never sing alone. Whether it's a new song or an old song, join the throng and sing along to the God of our salvation, for he has done marvelous things!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Creator, humbly I implore You To listen to my earthly song Until that day when I adore You, Together with the angel throng And learn with choirs of heav'n to sing Eternal anthems to my King. (LSB 811:5)

St. Mark, Evangelist

APRIL 25, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 16:14-20
Daily Lectionary: Exodus 40:17-38; Leviticus 1:1-7:38; Luke 8:40-56

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:16)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What a remarkable promise by Jesus here in Mark 16:16. Baptism saves. How can that be? We'll get to that in a moment. But first, let's review. What makes a Baptism a Baptism? Answer: water and God's Word. How much water? Jesus never says. Sprinkle? Sure. Immerse? If you want to. As long as you use water. No confetti. No rose petals. Water! Attached or hooked to the water is the all-authority-in-heaven-and-earth-Lord-Jesus' mandate: "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19. Not, "creator, redeemer and sanctifier." Not "creator, liberator, and sustainer." You are baptized when the water is applied with the divine mandate Word ("in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"). What divine Gift does the Triune God give you in holy Baptism according to Matthew 28:19? It is the divine and saving name! And with His name, the Triune God gives Himself to the baptized. Promises to be God for her. Promises to act as God for her. So, to be baptized in the Triune name is to be baptized by the Triune God Himself. Baptized in the divine and saving name of the Trinity, it is no surprise that the New Testament extols salvational benefits like Jesus does in Mark 16:16. Check out the following passages and note the benefits such as forgiveness and washing away of sin, Gift of the Holy Spirit, rebirth, justification, sanctification, etc.: Acts 2:38-39; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:26; Galatians 3:27; Titus 3:5-7; John 3:3-5; 1 Peter 3:18-22. All those benefits flow from the divine and saving name given to the baptized. This is why the Large Catechism correctly taught: "This is the simplest way to put it: the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of Baptism is that it saves." Oh, in addition, let's not forget that Peter declares that Baptism and all its salvific benefits are for "for you, and for your children and for all" (Acts 2:39)! And there's more: the words "for you" require all hearts to believe. Peter wants you to take this Gift personally. "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved," Jesus promises. Faith does not make a Baptism a Baptism. Faith receives what Baptism gives so that it may be beneficial for the baptized, as Jesus promises. Always use Jesus' promise of Mark 16 against your sin, Satan, and guilty conscience by saying: "But I am baptized! And if I have been baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body," (Large Catechism).

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

All who believe and are baptized Shall see the Lord's salvation Baptized into the death of Christ They are a new creation Through Christ's redemption they shall stand Among the glorious heav'nly band Of every tribe and nation (LSB 601:1)

Fourth Sunday of Easter

APRIL 26, 2026

Today's Reading: John 16:16-22

Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 8:1-13, 30-36; Luke 9:1-17

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

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

It's Thursday. The Passover is being celebrated. It's a familiar day—an ancient festival. And yet, there's something different about this day. This night. This Passover. Jesus teaches. Prays. Eats. Drinks. This is all familiar. But then Jesus does something new. He gives a New Covenant—a new testament—in his Body and Blood. Not only that, Jesus' words seem to reflect the darkness of this night. Sorrow. Weeping. Lament. Jesus is going away. What does this mean? They don't know, but Jesus knows. Jesus looks at their scared, bewildered faces and knows the suffering that's coming. He knows their fears, uncertainty, and sadness. He knows he is about to endure: jeers, whips, tearing flesh, blood dripping, anguish, pain, and agony. He knows the sorrow that will overwhelm them as they scatter with fear and denial, as the stone is rolled over Jesus' tomb. "You will weep and lament and the world will rejoice." Jesus is speaking about his death and resurrection. A little while, they would see him no more. Crucified. Dead. Buried. But in a little while, they would see him again. Risen. Glorified. Appearing in the Upper Room. Good Friday sorrow gives way to Easter joy. Anguish gives way to cries of "He is risen!" But Jesus' words aren't only for his disciples. Jesus speaks to you as well. As we live in the "little while" between Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and his coming again on the Last Day, life is often full of sorrows, weeping, and lamentation. For you, the baptized Christian, sorrow is not an illusion – it's real. Sometimes all too real. Sometimes it lasts days, weeks, years. Sometimes suffering doesn't go away with the dawn. Sometimes, time doesn't heal all wounds. In this life, sorrow, tears, and lament are real. But so is this: Christ's Gift of joy that no amount of suffering or sorrow can rob you of. Christ's dying and rising for you, bringing his suffering into the midst of yours, taking your suffering and sorrow upon himself, and giving you his crucified and risen joy. So, until the day when Christ returns, when everything sad will come untrue, we live in Jesus' promise: "You will have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us your Holy Spirit that when we hear the voice of our Shepherd we may know Him who calls us each by name and follow where He leads; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

St. Philip and St. James, Apostles

MAY 1, 2026

Today's Reading: John 14:1-14

Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 18:1-7, 20-19:8; Luke 11:1-13

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." (John 14:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

From the disciples' point of view, they had plenty of good reasons why their hearts were troubled. They had seen, or rather, smelled the formerly dead man known as Lazarus walk out of his grave. They got wind of the Pharisees' plot to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. They'd noticed the chief priests following them in the temple, through the streets, and around Jerusalem - their hostility and anger, a rising tide. They had seen the awesome faith in Jesus demonstrated by the crowds that followed them, and the appalling unbelief and rejection of Jesus by many in the same crowds.

Not to mention, Jesus kept saying and doing strange, odd things lately— like how the Son of Man was going to be lifted up; words of foreboding and darkness; warnings of betrayal and denial, of rosters and rejection, even among some of them. It's no wonder the disciples were troubled that Thursday night of Holy Week. And yet in the midst of all the disciples' fears, anxieties, worries, and bewilderment, Jesus speaks. "Let not your heart be troubled."

At first, this doesn't sound comforting. It's like the Queen in 1940s London telling you to keep calm and carry on while bombs are dropping all over, or Taylor Swift singing, "You need to calm down," when a relationship is broken and your emotions are running as fast as your heart is beating. But that's the difference between our words and the words from the Word made flesh. Jesus' words give exactly what he says. So when Jesus sits with his frightened disciples and says, "Let not your hearts be troubled," his word delivers his peace. Jesus' promise and presence are the foundation and the guarantee of those words. "Let not your hearts be troubled?" How? "Believe in God and believe in me? And don't worry, Jesus says, I'll give you faith too."

When Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled," he knew that Good Friday, the cross, and his death and burial were about to happen. But he also knew that Sunday morning was coming. The stone rolled away. An empty tomb. Resurrection from the dead. What Jesus says happens. What he promises comes true: for his fearful, troubled disciples, and for you in whatever troubles you face. Jesus' peace and promise are for you. So, "Let not your hearts be troubled."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, Your Son revealed Himself to Philip and James and gave them the knowledge of everlasting life. Grant us perfectly to know Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the way, the truth, and the life, and steadfastly to walk in the way that leads to eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Thursday of the Fourth Week of Easter

APRIL 30, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Creed Third Article
Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 17:1-16; Luke 10:23-42

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen." (3rd Article of the Apostles' Creed)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"So the Holy Spirit is like the Bat-signal," said a confirmation student while learning about the Third Article of the Creed.

"Wait, what?" I answered, bewildered, but curious. "What do you mean?"

"Well," he went on to say, "Whenever Gotham City needs help, they light up the Bat-signal, and it points the way; it lets people know help is on the way; it lets everyone know that Batman is coming to the rescue."

You might not think comic books could provide a talking point for confirmation class and the Holy Spirit. And believe me, I didn't think so at first either. But this kid was right.

God the Father sends God the Son. God the Son lives and dies for the sins of the world. God the Son promises God the Holy Spirit. God, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. God the Holy Spirit points us back to God the Son, who brings us back to God the Father. The Holy Spirit gives us Jesus. Works faith in our hearts. He calls us by the Gospel, gathers us in the Holy Christian Church, sanctifies us in Jesus, and enlightens us with all of God's holy Gifts.

The Holy Spirit is sent and given to let you, and all the baptized know, that help is on the way in Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Holy Spirit takes no days off, no breaks, no mid-day naps. His work is never done, yet is always being done in the Holy Christian church where we receive the forgiveness of sins. The Holy Spirit leads you to and gives you Jesus, who came to rescue, redeem, restore, and renew you. And thankfully, unlike your favorite comic book heroes, the Holy Spirit is not a work of fiction or fantasy. However, he does mask himself and work through ordinary means: water, word, bread and wine, the Gospel, the Absolution, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit is no imaginary hero, but the very real third person of the Holy Trinity who lives and works to call you to faith in Jesus, point you to your Savior, give you faith in Jesus, keep you in the faith, and eternally fill you with Good News: help is indeed on the way in Christ who rescues you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Creator Spirit, by whose aid The world's foundations first were laid, Come visit every humble mind; Come pour Your joys on humankind; From sin and sorrow set us free; May we Your living temples be. (LSB 500:1)

Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter

APRIL 27, 2026

Today's Reading: Isaiah 40:25-31
Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 9:1-24; Luke 9:18-36

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength." (Isaiah 40:28-29)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Nike tells you to "Just do it!" Your football coach says, "Winners never quit." Motivational slogans can be helpful on the court, field, or soccer pitch. What works on the field, however, doesn't always make the cut when it comes to the Christian faith. Life as a baptized saint doesn't always look like it does for the heroes of an inspirational movie, and it's rarely as smooth as a clever slogan on a motivational poster. There are moments, days, weeks, months, and even years where you're worn out, weak, and weary: Physically. Mentally. Spiritually. Times when you ache and groan from the hurts and pains of your own trespasses and from those who have trespassed against you. Times when you're weary of scrolling through so much evil in the world that it's overwhelming. Times when you grow faint, and it feels as if your faith is wavering, flickering like a birthday candle in a tornado. Isaiah knew days like this. Yahweh called him to preach God's warning and promise to His wayward people, Israel. But did they listen? Not nearly as often as they ignored God and His prophets. All those years of teaching, preaching, and proclaiming Yahweh's warning and promises. No doubt there were plenty of days when Isaiah felt weary, faint, and sapped of strength in body, mind, and spirit. But Isaiah had something, and you have something that those motivational posters and inspirational movies don't have: Yahweh's promise. "He does not grow faint or weary," declares Isaiah. "He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength." Isaiah knew that faith and trust in Yahweh wasn't for winners, but for sinners, like Isaiah, Israel, and you and me. To be sure, there will be days in this life that will still leave you feeling weary and faint. But take comfort in this, that when you are weak, weary, and faint, you're in good company. You're not alone. Isaiah proclaimed the Good News that Yahweh delivers us, not by our might, but by his mercy. Not by our power but his promise. Not by our strength, but in the Savior Isaiah foretold. A Savior, who came not in an awesome display of power or athletic prowess, but in weakness, humility, and sacrifice. His name is Jesus. Immanuel. God with us, even in moments of weariness. His steadfast love for you never fails. Never quits. Never ends.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

APRIL 28, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Peter 2:11-20 or 1 John 3:1-3

Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 10:1-20; Leviticus 11:1-15:33; Luke 9:37-62

"For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."
(Leviticus 11:44-45)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

In the story of the Scriptures, the word holy is like coffee shops in the Pacific Northwest or BBQ joints in Texas; you'll find holiness on every corner of every street as you travel the highway of God's Word. From God's holy sabbath rest on the seventh day of creation, to the holy of holies in the tabernacle, to the angels crying out holy, holy, holy around the Lamb's throne in Revelation, there's God in his holiness. God's holiness is a matter of proximity. The dust and rocks around the burning bush were holy. Why? Not because Moses worked some magic in the wilderness. Yahweh was there. It was holy ground. The wood, fabric, furnishings, ark of the covenant, along with the whole tabernacle, were holy. Why? Not because of the handiwork of Israelite craftsmen or the hands of the sons of Aaron and Levi. Yahweh was there. And that meant everything in and around the tabernacle was holy. God places his holiness alongside people, places, and things, and they, too, by his grace and promise, become holy. But there's a problem. Before God, we are wholly unholy. God's holiness is like Aslan in Narnia. God is good and holy, but he's not safe. Apart from Christ, God's holiness is not safe. So what does God do? God robes us in the holiness of Jesus crucified and risen. He declares you righteous and holy. In Christ, we receive God's holiness in Jesus' holy Gifts. God does all of this in a way similar to the way he did for Israel of old. By blood and water and sacrifice. Jesus the High Priest is also God's greatest and final offering for all our sins. On the cross, Jesus was defiled with all our uncleanness. On the cross, Jesus, who is wholly holy, became unholy for you, bore all our unholiness. And now he shares his holiness and holy Gifts with you. It's a matter of proximity. The holiness we lack, Jesus shares freely. From his holy cross, he brings you holy Gifts. His promise and presence in His Holy Word. A flood of forgiveness in Holy Baptism. Pardon and peace in Holy Absolution. His holy Body and Blood in Holy Communion. And where Jesus is, there is his holiness, and yours. For you have his promise: "You shall be holy, for I am holy. And you are holy in me."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

APRIL 29, 2026

Today's Reading: Leviticus 16:1-24

Daily Lectionary: Leviticus 16:1-24; Luke 10:1-22

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness."
(Leviticus 16:21)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The Day of Atonement in Leviticus sixteen is a tale of two goats. Both gathered at the tent of meeting. Both before the Lord. Both goats given by a gracious God to save his people and atone for all their iniquities. One goat was for a sin offering. A sacrifice. A substitute. The innocent for the guilty. Clean for the unclean. A life for a life. Blood sprinkled on the mercy seat. Atonement made by the Holy One of Israel in the Holy of Holies to make his people holy. To cover all their transgressions. The second goat was an offering as well—a living sacrifice. As Aaron laid his hands on this goat, he laid all the trespasses of the people upon it. All their sins. All their iniquities. This goat was sent packing away from the camp and into the wilderness. This goat, too, is a substitute. Sent away from God's presence so his people would remain in his presence. Given to bear Israel's sin so they would not have to. But there's more to this story. Two goats point to the One Lamb. Like the first goat, Jesus, is our sin offering. A sacrifice. A substitute. He is the innocent one who dies for the guilty. He is the Clean One who washes away all the filth of our uncleanness. He gives his life for your life. His blood is sprinkled and shed and poured out on the altar of the cross and then into a chalice upon the mercy seat of the altar in your church. And like the second goat, Jesus, went out into the wilderness. Jesus overcame Satan, where the Serpent overcame Adam and Eve. Jesus also bears the iniquities of the people, all people, on his head, as he goes outside the camp of Jerusalem. Into the wilderness of Golgotha, burdened and weighed down by all our trespasses, all our sins, all our iniquities. Jesus, the Lamb of God, is sent outside the city walls and is forsaken by God so that you and all who believe in him would remain in his presence. Jesus is given to bear our sin so we don't have to. This tale of two goats points us to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Where the paschal blood is poured, Death's dread angel sheathes the sword; Israel's hosts triumphant go through the wave that drowns the foe. Alleluia!
(LSB 633:3)*