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REFLECTIONS

**Fourth Sunday After Trinity through
Saturday of the Eighth Week After Trinity
June 28, 2026 - August 1, 2026**



JUNE 28 - AUGUST 1

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Saturday of the Eighth Week After Trinity

AUGUST 1, 2026

**Today's Reading: Introit for Trinity 9 - Psalm 54:1-3, 7; antiphon: Psalm 54:4-5
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 17:1-19; Acts 26:1-23**

"For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies." (Psalm 54:7)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

A Christian has enemies. From the moment when you were baptized, you became God's child and Christ's brother. But you also inherited Christ's enemies: the devil, the world, and your flesh. Granted, none of these were extras that had to be given to you. You always had your flesh, your sinful nature. You have always been in the world. And the devil has already been around. But these became your enemies the moment God claimed you as His and sealed that claim to you by the sacrament of Baptism.

Because Christians have enemies that, quite frankly, we can't escape, what can we do? We can't leave our flesh. We can't leave the world. No one can beat the devil in a footrace. But we likewise cannot fight. Our strength is too weak, our forces too scattered, our plans too clumsy. So we can't fight, and we can't run.

The good news is, there is One who fights for us. And it is to Him alone we cry. In our prayers, we call upon God our loving Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. And in the faith caused by the Holy Spirit, we trust that God not only hears our prayers but answers them. God promises that even when earthly enemies rise against you, He will still be your helper and sustain you.

And what is even more - not only will God help you. But He already has. Past tense. He has helped you in every trial. Your eye has looked in triumph on your enemies. For God sent His only Son to fight the enemies of the devil, the world, and your sinful nature. Here is the almighty arm of God - the crucified Jesus who dies for the sins of the world. Here is how God saves you by His name - His Son acts in God's name and by His authority as He lays down His life for the sheep. Here is how God helps you - by sending His Son to do what you could not, in your place, that by trusting in Him, you are free. And now baptized into Christ, your God has claimed you as His own and given you undying love. God is a Father who guards His dear children, His believers. And it is in Christ crucified and the Word that proclaims this and the Sacraments that convey the blessings of this, that your enemies have been defeated. God be praised.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Faint not nor fear, His arms are near; He changes not who holds you dear; Only believe, and you will see That Christ is all eternally. (LSB 664:4)

Friday of the Eighth Week After Trinity

JULY 31, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-23

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 16:1-23; Acts 25:13-27

"Whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him." (1 Samuel 16:23)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Martin Luther once observed that God's gift of music was second only to His gift of theology. For no other discipline could drive away the devil with his temptations, accusations, discouragement, and cunning. Theology could, as you would expect. But music does, too. We see that with David, whose music drove away the harmful spirit that troubled Saul.

Luther was right in calling music a powerful gift of God. Seeing how music can drive away sadness (and harmful spirits, too!), just think how much more powerful music is when it joins God's Word. To prove this, go hear hymns sung at Higher Things conferences online. That's power. But the power of music is nothing compared to the Word, for God the Holy Spirit has promised He will work by the Word to bring people to faith in Christ. He has not promised this for music in itself.

Music in the church can be a fine vehicle for the Word to come in, but the Word always must be the driver. Like a car rolling down the road without a driver, so music leads to wrecks when theology doesn't guide it. Therefore, church music promotes Jesus and His true teaching. It does not promote the performers, the soloist, or itself. This is why musicians were traditionally placed in the back of the church or in a special side section of the sanctuary. The focus was not on the musicians, in other words. It was on Christ and His Word. This is also why we don't clap in church. The music is for God's glory, not man's. God can clap if He wants to.

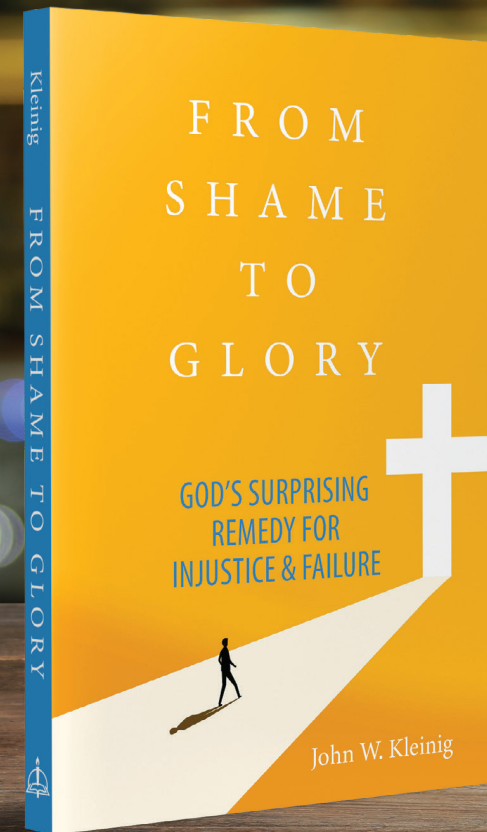
The best church music strengthens faith by its excellent teaching. Faith clings to Jesus who lived perfectly for you, died in your place, and rose from the dead. Church music should be churchly. It should gladly proclaim the free justification of sinners. Even in its notes and rhythms, church music should resemble our Lord who was not part of His culture, but ran counter to what His culture said. So music for God should be countercultural, reflecting the culture of heaven. We do not want music in the church to sound like what's popular now - we want music that's timeless. Does your favorite hymn sing Christ boldly? I hope so! I hope the music in your church supports the teaching of God's Word and doesn't water it down. That way, God's Word is taught even better, and the devil must flee.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus, His the scepter, His the throne; Alleluia! His the triumph, His the victory alone. Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion Thunder like a mighty flood: 'Jesus out of ev'ry nation Has redeemed us by His blood.' (LSB 821:1)

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A Short Form for Daily Reflection

ADAPTED FROM LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK

Make the sign of the Holy Cross and say:

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

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

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

Read the Daily Lectionary selections.

Read the Reflection for the Day.

Say the Apostles’ Creed.

Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

Pray one of these little prayers:

(In the Morning)

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

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

(In the Evening)

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

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

Thursday of the Eighth Week After Trinity

JULY 30, 2026

**Today’s Reading: Catechism: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism- Third Part
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 15:10-35; Acts 24:24-25:12**

“How can water do such great things? Certainly not just water, but the Word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this Word of God in the water. For without God’s Word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the Word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter 3: ‘He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying’ (Titus 3:5-8, quoted in the Catechism: Holy Baptism- Third Part)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Water alone gets you wet. It has no power to save. In this, Lutherans agree with other Protestants. They say that simple water can’t make you God’s child, or give the Holy Spirit, or forgive, or establish you in a new, godly life. To that, Lutherans say, “You’re right. Simple water can’t do that.”

But Baptism is more than just simple water, just as God’s Word added with the water is more than just a simple word. God’s Word does things. God’s Word works. The washing of water with the Word gives us a new birth as God’s children, a renewal of life that had been corrupted by sin, and it is a means of salvation. Why is it that simply speaking words over this water actually connects the Word to the water? You can read Holy Scripture over many other things - textbooks, your locker, your game system, and the Word is not joined to those things. But we say God’s Word is joined to the water of Baptism. Why is this? Remember, Jesus is also called “the Word of God” (John 1:1). As “the Word of God,” Jesus stood in the water at His own baptism. There, God called Jesus His beloved Son. The Holy Spirit was given to Him. And Jesus took His place among sinful men, that He might redeem sinful men. Because the Word of God - Jesus - was joined to that water then, so this same Word of God, Jesus, is also joined to the water of Baptism now. The Baptismal words of God also bring along the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus, who joins the two together. And there, God reveals Himself as your Father, Christ as your brother, the Holy Spirit as your treasure.

Thus, the water of Baptism is more than just simple water. As the Catechism says, it is indeed “a life-giving water, rich in grace.”

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Miracle each time it happens As the door to heaven opens And the Father beams, ‘Beloved, Heir of gifts a king would covet! (LSB 593:2)

Wednesday of the Eighth Week After Trinity

JULY 29, 2026

Today's Reading: Acts 24:1-23
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 14:47-15:9; Acts 24:1-23

"So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man." (Acts 24:16)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

There Paul stood, a prisoner before the Roman governor Felix. Jewish opponents stood spewing all kinds of false charges against Paul, all nasty things about his supposed guilt. The Roman governor was set to determine whether these charges were true or not. This was the situation Paul was to speak of the Christian faith! No safe audience there! Nonetheless, Paul was not afraid. He spoke boldly because he had the spirit of boldness. There were no real charges against Paul. The false charges could not stand. And his confession of the faith could not be dismissed by the governor.

In a way, you and I are like Paul. We stand on trial before God. And we have opponents who accuse us of all kinds of charges. The devil spews out his accusations against you for breaking God's Law. The world accuses you for not joining in with them in their godless actions and ways. And your sinful nature accuses you for times where you were too weak to withstand your temptations. Whether they are true or not, these accusations are brought up before you to God so that you might be punished.

But do not be afraid. There is another who has stood trial under the accusations of the Law. No, not Paul, but Jesus. Yet when all number of evil charges were raised against Jesus, He did not open His mouth. He did not defend Himself, so that He might defend you. He took on your sins and punishments, that you might take on His innocence and honor. Just as boldly - or more likely, even more bold than Paul, Jesus stood His ground and spoke to a different Roman governor. Paul was spared, Jesus was sentenced. But Jesus was sentenced that Paul might be spared, and you too! Spared before God by simple trust that Jesus did this for you.

Paul also said that he took pains to have a clear conscience before God and man. Faith in Christ gives you a clear conscience before God. For it holds onto Christ's righteousness that cleanses you of all your sins, as well as the sins done against you and the hurts you bear. Faith in Christ responds in good outward works, which gives you a clear conscience before men. For your conscience does not flare up when you show love to your neighbor. All of the Commandments are summed up by the word 'love.' So since Paul strove to have a clear conscience and this happens by faith in Christ and a God-pleasing life according to the Commandments, you also strive to have the same. For you are redeemed by God, and by your life you are invited to show it.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

God grant us strength, a clear conscience, and boldness in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Fourth Sunday After Trinity

JUNE 28, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 6:36-42
Daily Lectionary: Joshua 3:1-17; Acts 9:1-22

"...first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye." (Luke 6:36)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

If you have flown, you have heard the spiel. In the event that the oxygen masks are activated, put your own mask on first, then assist others. What?! For a Christian, that seems so backwards. Think of others first. Parents want to think of their children first. You want to care for your friend or loved one traveling with you. Why do the airlines give this instruction? Time is crucial. If you pass out from a lack of oxygen while helping someone else first, you both are in danger. However, if you secured your own mask, you can then continue to help them, and more may be rescued.

Jesus' words in today's reading are addressing a less noble moment, though. You know how it is—the urge to roll your eyes and tell everyone when that really annoying kid in class messed up. A certain lady at church is gossiping, and you SO want to call her out on it. You visit a different church on vacation, and you spend the whole service mentally judging every movement and choice that the pastor did wrong.

Now, in this passage, Jesus isn't saying to avoid calling sin "sin." He doesn't mean that you look the other way and pretend everything is great. But He IS saying to look at yourself first. Be convicted of your own sin, and repent. You are not superior to your fellow sinners. You are no better than those who annoy you; you are a fellow poor, miserable sinner.

When you do speak God's Word to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye, it is done with compassion and out of your own repentance. Words of Law are spoken with authentic love for them as children of God who are to be made aware of their sins, and encouraged and loved as fellow forgiven saints. Our Lord gives His Law to peaceably order society, make us all aware of our sin, and lead us to repentance. And He governs His Church by His saving Gospel, which rescues us from all the logs in our eyes and specks in our neighbors'.

So put on that oxygen mask of God's Word, receiving that Gospel that rescued you from sin and death. He may place others to then be helped by you. Or He may simply use the silent witness of your life, like the quiet gestures of the flight attendant, giving you that "spiel."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, grant that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Your governance that Your Church may joyfully serve You in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles

JUNE 29, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 16:13-19

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

"And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.'" (Matthew 16:17)

In the Name of ✠ Jesus. Amen.

Peter and Paul. The "Prince of the Apostles" and the "Apostle to the Gentiles." They both are great movers and shakers in the first generation of the New Testament Church—heroes of the faith. And we remember them with appreciation and thanksgiving, sometimes in our stained glass windows, or even with statues flanking the Risen Christ on some altars. It is good to remember them and give thanks.

But is it the wisdom and skill of Simon and Saul? Did Simon Peter pass some exam with flying colors, giving Jesus the right answer? Did Saul of Tarsus suddenly realize he was wrong on the Road to Damascus, and shout, "My bad!" as he made up his own mind to start a new life? Here is a hint: even with the greatest saints, they could "not by [their] own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ [their] Lord, or come to Him." The Father in heaven gave His Spirit to these men, that they might come to faith in Christ, and be great apostles to build the foundation of the Church.

These two had a great many things in common. Peter raised Dorcas from the dead; Paul raised Eutychus. Peter was released from jail in Jerusalem by an angel; Paul by an angel in Philippi. Both preach to thousands, both Jew and Gentile, around the Roman Empire. And then, the last thing they shared in common: they both were martyred in Rome during Nero's persecution of Christians. Paul, as a Roman citizen, was given a swift, less torturous death by beheading. Peter, as merely a subject of the Empire, was crucified.

Ah! But there is yet another thing in common. These two saints now rest from their labors, asleep in Jesus. And they are awaiting the Resurrection at the Last Day. The Resurrection foreshadowed in the empty tomb, and revealed to Peter in the Upper Room and at breakfast on the beach. The Resurrection was revealed to Paul when he was "knocked off his high horse" and saw and heard the Risen Christ on the Road to Damascus.

The Gospel of this Resurrection is revealed to you, too. Through the Word of God delivered by these two saints (and so many others!), you have been blessed and are being prepared for the Resurrection.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

We praise You for Saint Peter; We praise You for Saint Paul; They taught both Jew and Gentile That Christ is all in all. To cross and sword they yielded And saw Your kingdom come; O God, these two apostles Reached life through martyrdom. (LSB 518:19)

Tuesday of the Eighth Week After Trinity

JULY 28, 2026

Today's Reading: Acts 20:27-38 or Romans 8:12-17

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 13:1-18; Acts 23:12-35

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Were your ancestors slaves? Believe it or not, everyone should say yes. It doesn't matter who your parents are, or your family lineage, or where your ancestors came from. All people, since the Fall into sin, were born as slaves of sin. Just as a child born to slaves on a plantation was also a slave, so a child born to sinners is also a slave to sin. And that means everyone except Jesus. You included.

A slave does the will of his master. In the case of sin, the slave continues to sin. Willfully, intentionally, or simply because he can't help himself, the slave to sin feeds his sinful nature and sets his mind on the things of the flesh. That includes pornography, revenge, sinful pride instead of humble helping of others, rebellion against proper authorities, and self-righteousness. One cannot set his mind on doing such things and live before God. He is a slave, chained to his sin, and gladly serving it.

Jesus, however, came to set slaves of sin free. To do this, He first had to break the chains of sins. He had to live as the substitute in the place of sinners, and yet give up this perfect life to suffer the punishment for all sin. Christ Jesus has taken your place in death, which your sins deserved, and now is risen from the dead and proclaims you right with God. This is not because of how deserving you are, but simply out of God's great mercy and love to redeem sinners, a mercy rooted in Jesus.

To set slaves free from sins, Jesus also sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings Christ's righteousness to us and creates faith in the heart that receives this righteousness. From faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit also leads and compels believers to what the Lutheran Confessions call "the new obedience." Yes, we are to do good works. The phrase "good works" is not inherently bad. We just realize that good works are the fruits of faith, not the cause of faith. The Holy Spirit given to us allows us to set our minds on the things of the Spirit, which includes all of faith and a godly life. Therefore, we are adopted by God as His dear children, whom we cry out to in our prayers. What slave to sin can do this? But you are not a slave to sin. Therefore, set your mind on the things of the Spirit.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Though He giveth or He taketh, God His children ne'er forsaketh; His the loving purpose solely To preserve them pure and holy. (LSB 725:4)

Monday of the Eighth Week After Trinity

JULY 27, 2026

Today's Reading: Jeremiah 23:16-29

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 12:1-25; Acts 22:30-23:11

"I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied." (Jeremiah 23:21)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Years ago, a man began attending my home church. He was enthusiastic, appreciated the Word that was preached, and it seemed like he was a potential new member. However, after the third time coming when the pastor was going to ask if he wanted to take adult instruction, the man jumped the gun. "Preacher, again, I really appreciate what you've said. But next Sunday, I want to preach. The Holy Spirit has given me a word to say, too." The pastor informed the man that in the Lutheran church, only the called and ordained preacher was to preach. The man left annoyed, and never came back. So be it. The pastor did the right thing.

Just because someone thinks he should publicly proclaim a Word because of the Holy Spirit doesn't make it true. Man's feelings are not a reliable way to say whether the Holy Spirit wants him to publicly preach. What is needed is the training, the call of a congregation, certification, and ordination of a man. Otherwise, the man runs in the way of the false prophets of Jeremiah 23, who were not sent, yet went anyway, and who did not listen to the Word of God, yet spoke as if they had.

The early Lutherans warned that any man who publicly proclaimed God's Word without being called to the Office of the Holy Ministry would soon fall into error. Such a man would soon lead people astray, even if he seemed faithful at first. For God only sends immediately and directly, like the apostles who were sent by Jesus (Matthew 28:16-20). Or God sends proclaimers mediately and indirectly, like He did for Timothy, Titus, and all pastors since. God calls these pastors through the Church as though through an instrument. And just because someone is called to be a parochial school teacher or a DCE does not give them any call to publicly preach and teach God's Word. Those who do are also in danger, according to Jeremiah 23:21.

Now, certainly, some who are called and ordained men fall into false doctrine. But the problem is not that God didn't call such men to preach. The problem is that they themselves set out to proclaim a different word. The true Word, however, is centered on the crucified and risen Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, true God made man, whose word and sacraments work, who saves all who trust in Him, and who guides our feet in the way of righteousness. Give to Your Church more faithful, called preachers, O Lord!

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, bless the preaching of all called and ordained pastors, that these men may proclaim Your Word purely. Amen.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week After Trinity

JUNE 30, 2026

Today's Reading: Genesis 50:15-21

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

"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Genesis 50:20)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Joseph's brothers had a lot of specks in their eyes. They had gone for two decades without seeing him, after their tempers grew short that dreadful day. Nine of them wanted to kill him outright. Reuben persuaded a change of plan, and they threw him down a dry cistern. (Everyone else thought they were leaving him to die of hunger and thirst; only Reuben had a plan to return after everyone's tempers calmed down.) Then the plan changed again, and they sold Joseph into slavery. That was the last they saw of him for 20 years.

Of course, it had gotten worse. Joseph was treated well and completely trusted by his master, only to have the master's wife falsely accuse him of attempted rape. Off to prison he went. By the time Joseph was brought before Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, Joseph had been a slave or imprisoned for 13 years. Isolation. Cut off from his family, homeland, and language. Loss of freedom. Joseph suffered much, and humanly speaking, had a lot to be angry about.

Yet none of the brothers knew or understood the work and timing of God. The Lord was giving Joseph these experiences and placing him in locations that would lead to the saving of lives. Not just his and his family's, but the lives of thousands upon thousands in and around Egypt. Entire peoples were given life and delivered from death through the innocent suffering of Joseph.

You would think that after 17 years of living together in the land of Egypt, everyone would be relaxed and trusting at last. But the brothers were fearful that Joseph would come and judge them for all those specks when their father Jacob died. They came before him like beggars, ready to be his servants.

The Lord has mercy. In His mercy, He gave Joseph wisdom and understanding to see that the evil deeds done against him were actually setting a plan in motion that would save entire nations. None of them would be alive if it weren't for their past transgressions. As God had forgiven them, so also Joseph had forgiven. I'm sure he even saw the log in his own eye about the arrogance and in-your-face reporting of his boyhood dreams. In truth, we are all beggars. Joseph knew this. He was forgiven. And that forgiveness spilled over to those around him, understanding that God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

For Your Son has suffered for me, Giv'n Himself to rescue me, Died to save me and restore me, Reconciled and set me free, Jesus' cross alone can vanquish These dark fears and soothe this anguish. (LSB 608:3)

Wednesday of the Fourth Week After Trinity

JULY 1, 2026

Today's Reading: Romans 12:14-21 or Romans 8:18-23

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

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

It's like Paul is saying, "Don't lower yourselves to their level." Only he isn't wording it condescendingly or negatively. "Win them over by love and goodness." Yes, that is more like it.

When Paul had been the Pharisee of Pharisees, seeking out the supposed heretics - the Christians among the Jews, he had one thing in mind: lock them up, and if they don't recant, we will stone them all to death. He thought they were evil. And he was attempting to overcome their evil by the evil of killing them.

Jesus had other plans. He came and stood before this zealous and religious man, and came crashing down with the accusation: "Why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). And then He sent Ananias. But Ananias is not there to punish Paul. He does not come with weapons, a jail sentence, or even more words of judgment. Ananias is sent to call Paul "brother," to restore his sight, and to baptize him. Ananias overcomes evil with good.

Ultimately, that is what Christ Jesus Himself had done. Betrayed by one of the Twelve, beaten, spit on, stripped, humiliated, and then nailed to a cross to die of asphyxiation. You are hard-pressed to find anyone suffering more evil than that. Yet Jesus does not return evil for evil. The King of the Universe could have demanded justice against those transgressors and responded with agonizing punishment. But He did not. He knew the great paradox of His salvation for mankind was in overcoming evil with good. Jesus Christ remained good and holy even in suffering all evil. And the goodness of God is what overcame sin, death, and the devil in His sacrifice.

Now, Paul says, you do the same. Not simply as some example that you follow. Not because you are supposed to do it. The Law has been fulfilled by God the Son when He overcame evil with good at the cross. So now, you do this from the love of Jesus that fills you. In faith, the Lord grants that you respond to Him by loving your neighbor and doing good. Doing good can only come from faith in Christ, the One who has truly overcome evil with good. And as "little Christs," as Luther calls you, you are happy to not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Eighth Sunday After Trinity

JULY 26, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 7:15-23

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 10:1-27; Acts 22:17-29

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

A wolf that looks like a sheep is deceitful. He passes himself off as if he were just like everyone else in the flock. Yet beneath that woolly coat lies a predator. A wolf dressed like a sheep is expecting a big lunch. He can get in unnoticed and do great harm. But there is a way to detect a wolf even if it dresses like a sheep. Observant sheep can flee to their real Shepherd.

When Jesus says this, He is referring to false prophets. False prophets cling to what is false and reject what is true. God's Word alone is truth (John 17:17), so false prophets teach an anti-Word against what Scripture says. They hammer these anti-Word words over and over against the truth and purity of Holy Scripture. And this is how wolves destroy the sheep. They call evil good and good evil. They justify wickedness and destroy those grieved in heart. Proclaiming Law as if you can do it and Gospel as a gift that's yours if you try hard enough, false prophets cannot do anything but put sheep to death.

Since sheep cannot always tell a faithful preacher by how Christian of a man he looks, since even sheep's clothing makes one look like a faithful sheep, the sheep need another way to recognize a true shepherd from a wolf. Fortunately, that way is given to you. Read Scripture. Grow in learning it. See how it proclaims Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. See how everything that is needed for your salvation is already done, taken away by a bloody Lamb dying on a cross. See how death itself has been defeated by a slain Lamb who came back to life. See how the Word of this Lamb's gospel is proclaimed so that all who hear it and believe it will be saved. And learn from the Word of truth how sheep are to live, how we demonstrate that we are the people of the Lamb and not companions of wolves. Learn from the Word how our lives outwardly are to be modeled after the Ten Commandments, even while our souls are set free from the curse of the Law through faith in Christ. The more you learn the Word, the easier you can tell a faithful shepherd from a wolf dressed like a sheep.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Grant to us, Lord, the Spirit to think and do always such things as are right, that we, who cannot do anything that is good without You, may be enabled by You to live according to Your will; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

St. James the Elder, Apostle

JULY 25, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 10:35-45

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 9:1-27; Acts 21:37-22:16

"but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." (Mark 10:40)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The sons of thunder don't know what they're asking for. "Let us sit, one at your right hand, and one at your left, in your glory." I guess their nickname makes sense. It sounds like they want to be tag team champions of the world. They want the glory to be revealed in terms of power, not mercy. But the Son of Man is not glorified on a cross for sinners. To be at His right hand and His left in His glory is to be crucified with Him. That was an honor bestowed to thieves. It was prepared for them.

Sounds terrible, until you consider what it means. It was prepared for them to hear mercy right from the Lord's mouth. It was prepared for them to hear a sermon at the right hand of God. Paradise was prepared for at least one of them, too. They deserved to die because of their sins, but God prepared it so that they would receive mercy, even if He had to die between them to give it.

The sons of thunder would have hard lives that looked like Christ's. It was prepared, too. Eventually, they would drink from the cup of suffering. But it was prepared that Jesus die for them first. That way, they're not alone in it. They were already brought through it. They were baptized, not just into Jesus' pain, but His death, and so His resurrection. You were, too. Do you not know that in baptism, we are united with Him in His death? We will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His, too. The sons of thunder went to death in boldness, not because they were the greatest tag team duo to grace the squared circle, but because they first received the gift of life. It was prepared for them. And it was prepared for you. You drank from it, too. In baptism, you die with Jesus. In baptism, you rise with Jesus. You might suffer more yet, but you are already raised with Him. Focus on the mercy, and know He'll bring you through that, because He already died to accomplish it. It is prepared.

That shapes authority, too. Authority is a burden to the Christian. It's not about power, but mercy. It's not to be served but to serve. Authority is a gift. These are the places God prepared to serve you. The cross. Then even through your neighbor too.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O gracious God, Your servant and apostle James was the first among the Twelve to suffer martyrdom for the name of Jesus Christ. Pour out upon the leaders of Your Church that spirit of self-denying service that they may forsake all false and passing allurements and follow Christ alone, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

The Visitation

JULY 2, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 1:39-45 (46-56)

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

'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'
(Luke 1:42b)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Saint Elizabeth was blessed. Her young relative from Nazareth had arrived at her home, and she was happy to see her. You can just see her in your mind, coming to the doorway, seeing Mary, and shrieking with excitement! The crazy thing is, the Blessed Virgin would not even be one month into pregnancy yet. She's not showing. But St. Elizabeth knows! And she knows Who is in the womb of her relative, since God has revealed that to her.

Saint John the Baptizer was blessed. Today's world might dismiss him as merely a six-month-developed fetus. But that precious baby in his mother's womb was gifted by God also to know! St. John wasn't just kicking like babies normally do inside their mothers; he was leaping for joy at the presence of God! He was not able to use his voice yet to preach and point others to Christ, so he used movement to do the preaching. "Mom! Look! God is here!"

The Virgin Mary is blessed. God, in His wisdom and grace, chose this girl to be the Mother of God-with-us. She was blessed to hear the Word of God through the Angel Gabriel, and through faith to believe it. Then she was blessed to actually carry God in her womb! Nine precious months with the Creator inside a creature, the Nourisher and Sustainer of all being nourished and sustained by His mother.

All of these saints are blessed not from themselves, but from their connection to THE Blessed One. Take some time to go through the Psalms. Did you ever notice how many times it talks about the Blessed Man? It's not David bragging about how good he is. It's not even praising some prophet or other man. It's all about Jesus! Christ is THE Blessed One. And through His holy life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection, He gives that blessedness to you and all His Church.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. For He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden. For behold from this day all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things to me, and holy is His name; and His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away. He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His seed forever. (LSB 248)

Friday of the Fourth Week After Trinity

JULY 3, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: The Lord's Prayer - 7th Petition

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 8:1-28; Acts 11:1-18

"But deliver us from evil. What does this mean? We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven." (Small Catechism: Lord's Prayer - 7th Petition)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

I don't know about you, but it feels like there is a lot of evil all around. Voters in any major party these days will talk of their opponents as evil, even when they don't use that specific word. News on television or the Internet is constantly filled with stories of violent assaults and murder. Abortions are justified and even celebrated by massive amounts of people. And just about everyone knows someone with an ex-spouse who became vindictive and cruel in their dealings with them.

But settle down, Christian. You have that log to pull out of your own eye, again. There is lots of evil that Old Adam has swum back to the surface and accomplished. You're not just an innocent bystander.

Our loving and forgiving Lord knows that. And He died and rose for that. He suffered the absolute worst that evil could unleash at Him, and He won. Evil is defeated. The evil one is limited and knows he is doomed to the prison of hell.

That is why his misery-loves-company self hurls all that he can at us, to attempt to drag us down with him in unbelief. The evil one wants you to get so discouraged that you "curse God and die." (Job 2:9) Daily, he rages against Christ and His Church, with anything he can think of. But try as he might, even Satan can not steal you from God. He is a created angel, and can never overcome the Lord God. No one can snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:28)

The Lord sends the Comforter, who calls you by the Gospel, enlightens you with Christ's gifts, sanctifies you and keeps you in the one true faith.

That's really what we are praying for here. That the Lord continues to give His gifts and keep us in the faith, even when the devil is hurling evil at us. Jesus keeps you. Jesus preserves you. And even when you suffer assaults to body, mind, and spirit, He delivers you from evil by keeping you in that one true faith.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Friday of the Seventh Week After Trinity

JULY 24, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Trinity 8 - Psalm 48:1, 3, 11, 14; antiphon: Psalm 48:9-10

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 8:1-22; Acts 21:15-36

"As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness." (Psalm 48:10)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"Praise" gets met with hesitancy too much in our little pocket of Lutheranism. Yesterday's reflection was about the dangers of enthusiasm. There are places where an insistence on praise goes awry. Measuring praise as a feeling and insisting that the only right expression of faith is joy and gratitude is dangerous. There are Psalms of lament, too. Faithful Christians hurt, worry, and weep this side of glory. It isn't a question of whether or not we should feel these things. It's a question of whether or not there's a place to take them. Bring them to Jesus. This is actually right praise.

Praise is not measured by how much you feel gratitude. Praise is an expression of judgment. God has done something good. Here's the thing about praise, and why we hesitate too quickly when it comes to praise. You can't praise God unless He's first done something for you. To praise God is to first recognize what He has done. God only does that which is good. So everything God does is praiseworthy, even when you also need to lament something. Praise doesn't mean everything around you feels good. Praise means God has worked good in everything around you.

And the only way this is possible to see is through the lens of the cross. Nothing looks praiseworthy there, but it's the most praiseworthy act of all time. The cross is the reason God is always working good for us. He has redeemed you. He is not punishing you or casting you off. Even if you hurt now. He has promised to work all things for your good. So there is reason to praise Him even if we don't feel it, and even if it needs to be joined to a psalm of lament.

As God's name goes out into the ends of the earth, it brings praise, because His right hand, where Christ is seated, is filled with righteousness. He who is seated at the right hand of the Father makes you righteous by His death. He has died for all. So let His name and so His praise reach the ends of the earth.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen. (LSB 805)

Thursday of the Seventh Week After Trinity

JULY 23, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism - 2
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 6:19-7:17; Acts 19:23-21:14; Acts 19:1-22

What benefits does Baptism give?

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

Which are these words and promises of God?

*Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."
(Mark 16:16)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The devil wants you to think of your Baptism as a symbol, insisting that you place your faith in Jesus and not in water. It's because the devil wants to make Jesus impossible to find when you need Him. A Jesus whom you trust to save you but can't when you need Him to is pretty terrible. Because if you can't find Jesus in the water, you have to find Him in your heart.

On your good days, that's not so bad. When everyone sings the hymns, and you sing along and feel uplifted, strong, and steadfast, that's great. On the bad days, it's demonic, though. Because on the bad days, when you need Jesus the most, when you don't feel uplifted or strong or steadfast, if you try to measure Jesus in your heart, He feels missing. When you look in your heart for Jesus, whenever you need Him the most, He feels the farthest away. It's called enthusiasm, and I hate it. You should, too.

Instead of looking in your heart for Jesus, look in the font. Jesus saves. But it isn't that Jesus saves so Baptism doesn't. It's that Jesus saves you through Baptism. The Bible says Jesus alone saves you. The Bible also says Baptism now saves you (1 Peter 3:21). Instead of insisting that God contradicts Himself and dismissing the sacrament, recognize HOW God saves you, and even why.

It's not from your heart or measured in your heart. It's for your heart. Now, when you wrestle with guilt and shame, when you feel low and far from God, you have the promise of something near. You were drowned in salvation. You exist today as the Scriptures say. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Saturday of the Fourth Week After Trinity

JULY 4, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Trinity 5 - Psalm 27:1a, 11-12, 14; antiphon: Psalm 27:7, 9b

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

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 27:1a)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

As a young child, I don't really think I was scared of the dark; I just didn't like it. I wanted to be able to see where I was walking if I got up. And there was simply a little comfort in the soft glow of the night light.

As an adult most of my ministry has been in towns with plenty of light coming through our windows, so that it is never truly "dark." I still find the comfort and convenience of a little light to make my way to the bathroom, or kitchen for some water.

For some, though, there are things to be fearful in the dark. In a dangerous neighborhood there may be someone lurking and waiting to rob. Or maybe there is uneven ground or pavement, and someone can easily trip and be injured. In this sinful, broken world, there are many dangers that can await us there. These dangers have but one remedy. Light. And not just any light. Not a night light, or a lamp, or even a flood light.

Jesus says, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12) That is no mere opinion. It's not even a comparison to other sources of light in creation. It simply is pure truth that Christ Jesus IS the Light of the world. When the darkness of sin, death, and the devil feel like they are closing in on you, and you are being pulled into the depths of darkness, Jesus is the Light who is giving the comfort and the sure and certain hope.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? (Psalm 27:1a) The Light of the world is Jesus, whose very name means "The Lord saves." He IS salvation. King David is singing the sweet and powerful truth to you that Jesus is the LORD, He is the Light of the world, and He is salvation in the flesh. Your Savior is all this for you. And so you have nothing to fear.

The devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh are constantly lurking in dark places to ambush you. Yet your Lord Jesus, the Light of the world, has overcome the darkness for you. He defends and protects you, and His whole Church, as He calls you, His baptized child, out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Fear not. Jesus is the Light of the world, for you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Fear not! I am with you, O be not dismayed, For I am your God and will still give you aid; I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand, Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand. (LSB 728:2)

Fifth Sunday After Trinity

JULY 5, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 5:1-11

Daily Lectionary: Joshua 23:1-16; Acts 12:1-25

"And Simon answered, 'Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets'" (Luke 5:5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus blesses these unsuccessful fishermen with the greatest catch of all time, and through His blessing assures them and us that he will never let the godly grow hungry. He will give us bread and fish and will satisfy us with his provisions. He will feed us physically and give us daily bread. Yet he, the Bread of Life, will also satisfy us with living bread from heaven. He will feed us spiritually. Whoever feeds on him in faith will never hunger, thirst, or die. He will never let us perish spiritually. How does he comfort despairing, sinful Simon? "Do not be afraid," he says.

Look at how this story began. The crowds were pressing in on Jesus. Like a celebrity that gets swarmed by a crowd, Jesus is trying to get away as the crowds press in on him all the way up to the shore—and this, to "hear the word of God." Wouldn't your Pastor love to have that happen every Sunday morning, with crowds of people swarming to get into church and hear God's Word? So, what will Jesus do? He will feed his people. He will teach his people. He will call his people.

This story begins and ends with the Word of God. The crowds are drawn in to hear God's Word, and the disciples are sent out to proclaim God's Word. Jesus blesses his disciples with physical provision, spiritual healing, and finally, a spiritual office. He calls them to be fishers of men. He gives these despairing men a hopeful calling. He gives these sinful men an office of forgiveness. He gives these poor fishermen the treasures of heaven. He gives these frightened men courage to follow.

When we toil all night and catch nothing but discouragement and despair, we should follow Peter's example in handing over our lament to God and obeying his Word. We should let God do the worrying—if it doesn't work out, he knows why; and if it does, all glory, honor, and praise belong to him. In everything we do as Christians, we trust God's Word. We throw out his net and let him worry about how full it will be. If God blesses our bodies and souls, he will surely bless our work and gifts. He will not let us labor in vain. His blessing will always accompany us in our work.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, You have prepared for those who love You good things that surpass all understanding. Pour into our hearts such love towards You that we, loving You above all things, may obtain Your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

St. Mary Magdalene

JULY 22, 2026

Today's Reading: John 20:1-2, 10-18

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 5:1-6:3, 10-16; Acts 18:1-11, 23-28

"They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.'" (John 20:13)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Folks have spilled a lot of ink over Mary Magdalene's chastity. Especially since the scriptures don't ever name the prostitute who anoints the Lord's feet with her tears. I think it's on purpose. The blessed evangelists name and leave nameless according to the Spirit. It's on purpose when someone is named. It's on purpose when someone is not. I don't believe the woman who anoints Jesus' feet is left nameless so that we can assume the worst in someone Jesus calls a saint. I believe it's because if Jesus takes away your sin, your sin isn't tied to your name anymore.

To be known by your sin is the opposite of Christianity. You are known by your Christ. He bled and died for you. They become His, and your sins are forgiven. You become His, and you are known by your name, washed clean even as you wear His in your Baptism. Your name is redeemed with the rest of you. Your name is sanctified with the rest of you. Jesus insists.

It is the same Jesus who pursues Mary. Throughout her sins, her confusion, her disbelief, and her despair. He greets her by name. Mary. And here, she sees who He is. He is the one who gives us clean names again. This is who she is. Mary. Chaste. Faithful. Pure. But most of all, met by a risen Lord. She is witness to the victory over death, the forgiveness, and all the hope that it brings. I don't know if Mary was at one point a prostitute. I do know that her tears are wiped away in any case, and names tied to old sins are forgiven and penned in the book of life. Like yours.

You are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Your identity is tied to this, not your sin. Jesus insists. When He pens your name into the book of life, it is through this Baptism, this redemption. Your name doesn't have an asterisk (*) by it, with all your sins listed out. Those are left at the cross. Jesus meets you in the resurrection and calls you by name. Rejoice with Mary.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, Your Son, Jesus Christ, restored Mary Magdalene to health and called her to be the first witness of His resurrection. Heal us from all our infirmities, and call us to know You in the power of Your Son's unending life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Tuesday of the Seventh Week After Trinity

JULY 21, 2026

Today's Reading: Romans 6:19-23

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 4:1-22; Acts 17:1-34; Acts 16:23-40

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Calling the faithful "slaves of God" in the year of our Lord 2025 feels uncomfortable. It feels like it needs a lot of context for what it isn't. Paul doesn't give it. Instead of his next words justifying the hyperbole, he justifies the sinner. He doesn't minimize what slavery looks like. He just asks us to consider how freedom in regard to righteousness actually goes.

You are either slaves to sin or slaves to God because you're not actually God. To Paul, it's not even a question of ability. It's a question of whether or not it would be a good thing if you were. If you actually were the most powerful being in the universe...how would that go? Back before you belonged to God, what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. It's your death because you're not God. But if you were, how would it not just be someone else's death who got in your way? Instead of arguing over whether or not your sinful flesh is powerful enough to escape the grave, Paul asks whether or not having sinful flesh is good in the first place. Whether it be your death or the death of everyone who got in your way, God would rather it be His. The wages of sin is death, and so He pays it for you.

The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. You are not free. You have a Lord. There are other lords. Many try to be lords themselves. But yours is the one who lays down His life to save yours. Rather than bickering about who's in charge, Paul points to the results—your salvation. You are not free in regard to righteousness. You are not free to sin. You are free from it, though. You are free from death. On the Last Day, you will rise. You are even free from having to deal with all the enemies in your way to live. Sin. Death. The power of the devil. All come undone in Him who owns you and treats you as a treasure. Calling the faithful "slaves of God" was never a comfortable statement. It was never supposed to be. Rather, Paul lets our comfort be in Him who sets us free from death.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

When You woke that Thursday morning, Savior, teacher, faithful friend, Thoughts of self and safety scorning, Knowing how the day would end; Lamb of God, foretold for ages, Now at last the hour had come When but One could pay sin's wages: You assumed their dreadful sum. (LSB 445:1)

Monday of the Fifth Week After Trinity

JULY 6, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Kings 19:11-21

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

"I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life" (1 Kings 19:10, 14)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Elijah, wearied from forty days and forty nights of wandering toward Mount Horeb, waits in the cave for "the word of the Lord." He waits alone, afraid for his life. If it were only Jezebel who sought to kill him, perhaps he could endure it—but it is not just the queen. It is the "people of Israel" themselves who seek his life, to take it away. If he had even one faithful prophet besides him, perhaps he could bear it—but no, he alone remains. All the rest have bowed their knees to Baal. They have forsaken God's covenant, thrown down his altars, and slain his prophets.

Twice, the Lord asks Elijah a question he may already be asking himself: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Perhaps Elijah restrains himself from asking the same in return: "What are you doing here, Lord?" And the Lord answers that unspoken cry—not in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire—but in a still, small voice. A prophet in solitude, prophets in death, a covenant broken, and altars overthrown—Elijah cries into the silence and believes alone.

Yet how does God answer Elijah's zealous lament? Elijah, who fears Jezebel's injustice, is given the power to anoint leaders in both church and state who will bring justice to the land. The Lord of heaven and earth, who commands wind and land and fire, commands the weary prophet to anoint two kings and one prophet. From Hazael to Jehu to Elisha, none will escape the sword.

Elijah, who shrank back because of Israel's faithlessness, is welcomed into the company of seven thousand men who have not bowed their knees to Baal. God shows His love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His Commandments.

Finally, Elijah, who mourned in lonely exile, departs and finds a faithful companion near. Elisha receives the prophet's cloak, call, and commission, and commits himself to the Lord's work. Strengthened by the presence of his God on Mount Horeb, Elijah descends to the plain to proclaim—together with Elisha—"the word of the Lord."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

God of the prophets, bless the prophets' sons; Elijah's mantle o'er Elisha cast. Each age its solemn task may claim but once; Make each one nobler, stronger than the last. Anoint them prophets, men who are intent To be Your witnesses in word and deed, Their hearts aflame, their lips made eloquent, Their eyes awake to ev'ry human need. (LSB 682:1-2)

Tuesday of the Fifth Week After Trinity

JULY 7, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

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

"The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Each Sunday, amid a deeply disordered and violent world, we preach Christ crucified. We preach what the world calls foolish, weak, and despised. We preach a Savior who bore every sin in his body on the tree, who suffered the greatest evils this world has ever known, who sweat and sighed his last breath upon a cross raised by his enemies, stained by his blood, and despised even by his friends. We preach a Savior who made himself of no reputation and became obedient unto death, even a slave's death on the cross.

That is why Paul says that the cross is folly to those who are perishing. To the Jews who crucified him and to the Gentiles who blaspheme his name, Christ's death seems fruitless and powerless. To an unbelieving world that hates and rebels against the truth, the cross makes no sense. But to us who are being saved, what is death? Is it fruitless? Is it powerless? Is it a defeat? To the Christian, what is the word of the cross? Though to the world it appears foolish and senseless, to us it is the power of God. It is fruitful. It is powerful. It is victory and glorification.

This is what we preach—not only on Sundays, but every day. Christ crucified is the power and the wisdom of God. It pleases God, through the folly, the weakness, and the defeat of what we preach, to save those who believe. God chooses what is foolish to shame the wise, what is weak to shame the strong, and what is low and despised—even things that are not—to bring to nothing things that are. And Christ has become for us "wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Merciful God and Father, You have graciously promised that through the preaching of the crucified Christ, those who believe in Him will be saved. By Your Holy Spirit, grant grace to all pastors of Your church. Grant them readiness and steadfastness in this ministry, patience, understanding, and great zeal. Support and strengthen them in Your service that by Your Word Your Church may be built and increased; through Your Son, our great High Priest, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Monday of the Seventh Week After Trinity

JULY 20, 2026

Today's Reading: Genesis 2:7-17

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 3:1-21; Acts 16:1-22

"but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:17)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

There's this Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, where if you eat it, you die in the Garden of Eden. And that kinda feels messed up. Is it a good tree? God said yes. We're not sure. We tend to think that if it's not a trap, it's at least a test. Which says plenty about what you actually think about the God who put it there. We still think He's, if not setting traps for us, at least testing us.

A loving God doesn't "test" us with death any more than I, who love you less than God, would test whether or not you remember how a fire drill works by lighting the building on fire. Also, an all-knowing God would know this whole thing plays out poorly. What if the Tree that God called Good was not a test or a trap? What if He called it good because it was given with a good purpose, to reveal who God is? To teach Adam and Eve that all of evil should be contained on a tree for man to behold and know the peace of not having to die because God bore the sin that would kill them for them? What if the tree was good because it was the very first church? Adam and Eve could worship here, celebrate the mystery of the God who hangs evil on the tree that they would not die. The thing is, mystery is only good if you trust the guy behind the curtain. But if the tree wasn't a good thing, then it's pretty solid proof God who put it there wasn't so good either. This is how the serpent tempted.

But God met them in the garden, not to destroy, but to promise a child born of woman to hang on a second tree to crush the head of the serpent forever. God saw the tree in the garden. God saw the tragedy that changed you forever. God saw everything that's gone wrong since and hated it too. So He assumes it. Climbs down from heaven to walk up the hill of Golgotha and die on the cross. For you. For them. For those who have faced the tragedies that leave us speechless and bitter and broken. For the forgiveness of all your sins. Your quiet mistrust. Your open rebellion. Jesus died for that. Because God still insists on gathering up all the evil in the world and hanging it on the tree so that death would have no power over us and sin would not define us. Look at the tree of the cross and call it good, because this is who your God is.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What mercy God showed to our race, A plan of rescue by His grace: In sending One from woman's seed, The One to fill our greatest need— For on a tree uplifted high His only Son for sin would die, Would drink the cup of scorn and dread To crush the ancient serpent's head! (LSB 561:3)

Seventh Sunday After Trinity

JULY 19, 2026

Today's Reading: Mark 8:1-9

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 2:18-36; Acts 15:22-41

"I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat." (Mark 8:2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Sometimes it's hard to reconcile Jesus' compassion in wanting to feed the 4,000 with the three days it took Him to actually do it. For every one of the voiceless 4k with hunger pains and every family gathered around a hospital bed praying for healing while machines beep and nurses give sad smiles, for everyone looking around trying to find the supposed compassion and coming up short, let me go ahead and speak the collective "why?" we're all afraid to give voice to. Why do we have to wait? Why do we have to suffer? Why, if You can fix this, God, do we have to wait for you to get around to doing it?

It's not a new question. I used to have the audacity to ask my mom why she didn't start dinner 15 minutes earlier so we could be eating now. It was shortsighted then. It's shortsighted now. It's just hard to see past sin and the pain it brings. This is what sin does. It finds excuses not to look to God for every good thing. To not fear, love, and trust Him above all things. The veil it casts over us brings that other kind of fear, the one that really struggles with love and trust. The one who loses sleep and trembles when compassion feels far off.

The truth is that God does work in mystery, in His own ways and His own time, and yet always for good. It is always compassion that drives Him. Ultimately, it drove Him to the cross for the 4,000, and for all who hurt and suffer under sin. And again, they waited three days in fear and trembling, even after it was finished, before the angels proclaimed His resurrection. But Christ is still risen.

So to everyone waiting with fear and trembling, who feels the same despair of the grave, remember. It is already finished. Even during those three days, it was finished. All of the blindness of sin could not prevent the resurrection. All our whys won't stop Him from working for your good in His own way and own time now. Take heart. Our Lord sees you and has compassion. He IS working, even now. To bring you out of darkness and sin and despair, and into the same resurrection. Take heart. Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks, He broke it, and He gives it to you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, whose never-failing providence orders all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly implore You to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things that are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Wednesday of the Fifth Week After Trinity

JULY 8, 2026

Today's Reading: Acts 13:42-52

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

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What were "these things" that those in Antioch to whom Paul preached wanted to hear about the next Sabbath? What are "these things" that Paul preached, which stirred the Jews and proselytes to follow Paul and Barnabas? Put simply, "these things" are the great works of God. Paul preached in Acts 13:17-41 that God chose the patriarchs and multiplied his people during their sojourn in Egypt. With an uplifted arm, he led them out of bondage, patiently enduring their stubbornness in the wilderness. He destroyed the seven nations in Canaan and gave his people the Promised Land as an inheritance. He raised up judges to lead them until the time of Samuel the prophet. When the people demanded a king, he gave them Saul, and when Saul proved unfaithful, God raised up David—a man after his own heart. Finally, from David's descendants, God fulfilled his promise by bringing to Israel a Savior, Jesus, for whom John the Baptist prepared the way. Paul proclaims "these things" to the men of Israel, assuring them that the Gospel, this "message of salvation," was sent first to them (Acts 13:26, 46). Yet since the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem rejected Jesus as the fulfillment of God's works, the prophets' words, and the promise given to their fathers—since they "thrust it aside and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life" (Acts 13:46)—Paul declares that "these things" are not for the Jews alone, but also for the Gentiles. Indeed, this has always been God's plan of salvation foretold by Isaiah (45:22, 49:6) and confessed by Simeon after Jesus' birth (Luke 2:29-32). Just as Jesus Christ was appointed a light for revelation to the Gentiles, so Paul and Barnabas have been made lights for the Gentiles as they bear the light of Christ. "How beautiful are the feet of him who brings good news" (Isaiah 52:7) and "brings salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47)! Though persecution arises on account of Paul and Barnabas' preaching, the disciples of Jesus are "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52). "These things" have now been fulfilled in their midst, and they are glad to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. They count it all joy to meet such trials, rejoicing in their sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope—a hope that does not put them to shame, because God's love has been poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:3-5).

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

May God bestow on us His grace, With blessings rich provide us; And may the brightness of His face To life eternal guide us, That we His saving health may know, His gracious will and pleasure, And also to the nations show Christ's riches without measure And unto God convert them. (LSB 823:1)

Thursday of the Fifth Week After Trinity

JULY 9, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: The Lord's Prayer - The Conclusion
Daily Lectionary: Judges 4:1-24; Judges 5:1-31; Acts 14:1-18

"He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us."

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

When Jesus teaches the disciples the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11, he not only teaches them what to pray for, but also how to pray. There, he tells the parable of a man who goes to his friend at midnight asking for bread. The friend's door is shut, his whole family is asleep, and he says, "Do not bother me; I cannot get up and give you anything." Yet Jesus says that when this friend finally helps, it will not be because of their friendship, but because of the man's impudence—his shameless persistence. Because he keeps asking and knocking, his friend will give him what he needs. Jesus then gives the how of prayer: ask, seek, and knock. "Ask, and it will be given to you." And if it is not given to you, "seek, and you will find." Seek again the wisdom of God's Word, and discover what the Lord has given you to pray for. Then "knock, and it will be opened to you." Be that man who persistently knocks on his friend's door at midnight. Pray always. Jesus wants us to bother him, to pester him with our prayers, to knock and keep knocking. Finally, Jesus compares prayer to the relationship between a father and his child. If a son asks for a fish, will his father give him a serpent? Or if he asks for an egg, will he hand him a scorpion? Of course not. So, Jesus concludes: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" The Father delights to hear our requests and answer them. He has commanded us to pray and has promised to hear us. Yet Jesus doesn't want us to think of prayer mechanically, as though God listens only because of our many repetitions. When he tells the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18, it is "to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." If this widow persevered and "prayed always," trusting that her persistence would move even an unjust judge to grant her justice, how much more should we persevere in prayer and "not lose heart," we who call upon the God who delights to give justice to his elect? If the "judge of unrighteousness" granted justice at last, will not the "Judge of all righteousness" bring justice to his elect? That is why we pray both day and night, confident in his mercy and steadfast love. We won't receive justice because we persevere in prayer; we persevere in prayer because we know that God will give us justice. And if he delays, we remember that even his delay is for our good—to strengthen our faith.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Saturday of the Sixth Week After Trinity

JULY 18, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Trinity 7 - Psalm 47:3, 6-8; antiphon: Psalm 47:1-2
Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 1:21-2:17; Galatians 6:1-18

"God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne." (Psalm 47:8)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What does it mean that God reigns over the nations? Does it mean He seeks power over all to control the people of the world? Or is it a declaration of His love for all of creation, and even as sin continues to wreck the world and Satan and his minions ravage and destroy, there is a God, and He hears the cries of those who suffer? It is true: the Lord reigns over all. He is the Almighty. His will is done whether we like it or not. Our God is all-powerful and deserving of worship, as the psalmist says. The Lord sits on His holy throne, and sinners cannot approach Him. Evil cannot stand against Him. This is our God.

We can take comfort in knowing the God of all has made Himself known to us. But the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present God uses His "God-ness" to do wonderful things. God reigns over the nations on His holy throne, not to bring power to Christians but to forgive sinners.

From His holy throne, He descended, taking on human flesh to make Himself known to all nations. He came not as a mighty ruler but as a servant. God heard the cries of hurting people from the time of Adam and Eve's first sin. To heal the open wound of a sinful, broken world, He sent forth His only Son. And this good news, this Gospel is not just for one people or nation, but for all people, that many more may come to faith in Christ.

Even while the Lord sits on His holy throne, those who are in Christ are not excluded from His presence. Having been made holy, we will see the Lord in all His glory on the Last Day, when all nations and peoples will bow and proclaim the name of the Lord. The Lord our God is mighty and reigns over the nations. He calls them to Himself, that they may remain in His house forever.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

What God's almighty pow'r has made, in mercy He is keeping. By morning glow or evening shade His eye is never sleeping. Within the kingdom of His might all things are just and good and right: to God all praise and glory!" (LSB 819:2)

Friday of the Sixth Week After Trinity

JULY 17, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 1:1-20

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 1:1-20; Galatians 5:1-26

"Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.'" (1 Samuel 1:17)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Hannah's prayer is for a child - and not even for a child she will keep and raise, but one she will give to the Lord for His service. She is burdened by her bareness and even tormented for it by her husband's other wife. So she prays to the Lord, seeking comfort and peace. Prayer, in any circumstance, is chiefly about comfort. It is a gift of God given to those who would seek refuge in Him. Hannah knows the Lord will hear her and has the power to grant her petition. Eli's benediction to Hannah is further comfort. Eli did not, in that moment, call upon God, of his own accord, to be the baby delivery guy, but to give comfort to a hurting soul—a soul burdened by sin and its effects. Eli, a priest, the shepherd of God's people, gives her comfort and peace. In that moment, God's Word was spoken to Hannah, and she would return to Eli with her son, Samuel, in due time. God's will was accomplished.

It might be tempting to see this account as proof that if you pray hard enough or feel deep enough, God will hear your prayer and grant it. This turns God into more of a vending machine rather than the Almighty God, but what do you do when prayers go "unanswered?" Understand that "unanswered" is in quotes. God answers prayer, always, even when the answer isn't what we'd prefer. Our prayers do not sway Him; His good and gracious will is always done among us. His good and gracious will was to grant Hannah a son, who would grow into the faithful prophet and priest, Samuel. We don't know how many times Hannah, or her husband for that matter, prayed about her barrenness. But she knew that God heard every cry to Him and He would, in His time, answer her.

When you are burdened by suffering or hardship or sin, call out to your heavenly father. He hears you. And when you have groanings too deep for words, He still hears you and sees you. Hannah's prayer was made in faith and made in something greater than a spiritual vending machine. The God of Israel is your God, who made heaven and earth, sent His Son to redeem creation, and gives the Holy Spirit that we might be first and foremost, reconciled to God, and also comforted in our affliction because God has given us His forgiveness and peace.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Though He giveth or He taketh, God His children ne'er forsaketh; His the loving purpose solely to preserve them pure and holy. (LSB 725:4)

Friday of the Fifth Week After Trinity

JULY 10, 2026

Today's Reading: Acts 14:19-15:5

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

"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

After preaching the Gospel to both Jews and Greeks in Iconium, Paul remained there a while, "speaking boldly in the Lord" (Acts 14:3), before departing for Lystra. However, a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed that Satan shot his flaming darts through the "poison" of the unbelieving Jews. He sowed the seeds of division and violence, stirring up some Gentiles and Jews to stone Paul and Barnabas. Upon learning of this, they fled to Lystra and Derbe.

Yet some Jews pursued him, coming from Antioch and Iconium to persuade the crowds to stone Paul. What God said to Ananias concerning Paul came true: "I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:16). He is afflicted by such violence, but is he crushed? He is perplexed by unbelief, but is he despairing? He is persecuted, but is he forsaken? He is struck down and even assumed dead (Acts 14:19), but is he destroyed? Not at all—for the very life of Jesus is manifested in his earthly body. The power of Christ rests upon him in his weakness. He shares Christ's suffering and becomes like him in his death.

So, after arising and entering the city with the disciples, he journeys onward to Derbe the very next day. He is not crushed but renewed. He is not driven to despair but filled with hope. He is not forsaken but filled with the Spirit. He is not destroyed but strengthened for the work God has called him to do. Each trial becomes an occasion for endurance, for building character, and for rejoicing in the promise of God's eternal glory. After preaching the gospel to Derbe, he again returns to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

What an encouragement! Elders are appointed for ministry in the church, and the hearts of the faithful are committed to the Lord through prayer and fasting. From Pisidia to Antioch, the Word of God takes root, and a door of faith is opened to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

My walk is heav'nward all the way; Await, my soul, the morrow, When God's good healing shall allay All suffering, sin, and sorrow. Then, worldly pomp, begone! To heav'n I now press on. For all the world I would not stay; My walk is heav'nward all the way. (LSB 716:6)

Saturday of the Fifth Week After Trinity

JULY 11, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Trinity 6 - Psalm 28:1-2, 7; antiphon: Psalm 28:8-9
Daily Lectionary: Judges 6:25-40; Acts 15:6-21

"Save Your people, And bless Your inheritance; Shepherd them also, And bear them up forever" (Psalm 28:9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

In Psalm 28:9, David prays that God would save his "people" and bless his "heritage." He then adds the image of a shepherd and his flock: "Be their shepherd and carry them forever." Psalm 23 and John 10 immediately come to mind. Yet what about this image of a "heritage" or "inheritance?" How can we, God's people, be called his inheritance?

Throughout Scripture, "inheritance" typically refers to the gift or portion that God gives to His people—first, the land of promise, and ultimately, eternal life in Christ. God himself is also his chosen people's inheritance: "I am your portion and your inheritance" (Numbers 18:20), "The Lord is my portion" (Lamentations 3:24), "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34), "In him we have obtained an inheritance" (Ephesians 1:11).

Yet here in Psalm 28:9, the relationship is reversed—God's people are called his heritage! How can this be? After Moses ascended Mount Sinai a second time to receive the tablets of the Law, he prayed, "Take us for your inheritance." Likewise, Moses wrote, "The Lord has taken you ... to be a people of his own inheritance" (Deuteronomy 4:20). St. Peter takes up this same theme when he declares, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (1 Peter 2:9), and St. Paul prays that believers may know "the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18). Paul also joins this "heritage" and "shepherd" imagery in his charge to the Ephesian elders: "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock ... the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). This is how we become God's inheritance! He has purchased his flock with his own holy blood! Psalm 74:2 echoes the same truth: "Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old, which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage!" We are God's heritage—his treasured possession. He has purchased us with his own blood, sealed us with his name, and joined us to his death and resurrection in Holy Baptism. We are his, and he is ours. Where he is, there we shall be also. He is the Vine, and we are the branches. Will God be silent to us? Will he turn his face away and ignore our pleas for mercy? No—"The Lord is my strength and shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped" (Psalm 28:7).

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

He never shall forsake His flock, His chosen generation; He is their refuge and their rock, Their peace and their salvation. As with a mother's tender hand, He leads His own, His chosen band: To God all praise and glory! (LSB 819:4)

Thursday of the Sixth Week After Trinity

JULY 16, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism - 1
Daily Lectionary: Judges 16:4-30; Judges 17:1-21:25; Galatians 4:12-31

"Baptism is not simply water, but it is the water included in God's command, and combined with God's Word." (Luther's Small Catechism)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Water is necessary for life. Water helps plants grow, so all living creatures have something to eat. Staying hydrated is important, too, so drink more water, kids! Water cleans things by washing away dirt. Water also has a great capacity for destruction. Too much rain leads to flooding, mighty tides of water that pummel everything they crash into, leaving devastation in its wake. Rough water can drag a person down into the deep to drown and die. Tsunamis, hurricanes, and floods are all deadly. They are an example of how broken and sinful the world has become. Instead of bringing life, it ends it.

All of creation is no longer "good," but tainted by sin and death. All things wither and die. Our sinful nature compels us to do harm to our neighbors and ourselves. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh hate God, wanting nothing to do with him. We turn good gifts into weapons against the life God would have us defend and uphold.

But God takes what is broken, sinful, and dying and makes new life. He creates abundant life in the midst of death, decay, and destruction. So, then, water, when combined with the Word of God, becomes a source of resurrection—a place where Christians are made. God names you in His Triune Name, marking you as one whom death has no claim over. Your sins are washed away, and a new, clean robe is given to you. The stain of sin, taken on by Christ, is no longer yours to bear. Jesus takes our sin and drowns it, burying it and leaving it behind. God restores life to where death and sin reigned. Water is necessary for life, and it is this creation of God, paired with His Word, that gives us life eternal. The Word of God, which spoke everything into existence, in Baptism, now calls the dead sinner to life, out of the waters and into light.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"Though around us death is seething, God, His two-edged sword un-sheathing, by His Spirit life is breathing through the living active Word." (LSB 597:4)

Wednesday of the Sixth Week After Trinity

JULY 15, 2026

Today's Reading: Galatians 3:23-4:11

Daily Lectionary: Judges 15:1-16:3; Galatians 3:23-4:11

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." (Galatians 3:27-29)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Baptism makes all equal in the eyes of God. Baptism makes us one with Christ, as we are united with Him in a death like His and in a resurrection like His. We all stand before God as justified, redeemed, and sanctified. We are all descendants of Abraham as heirs of the promise. The Jews believed it was their earthly, blood relation to Abraham that made them God's people. Their people had followed God's commands and observed all His statutes. This is why many of the Jewish Christians demanded that the Gentiles be circumcised - so they might be included in Abraham's line. The emphasis was on works of the law. In the minds of the "circumcision party," the Greeks had to become Jewish before they could really be saved.

St. Paul's point is that once a person is baptized into Christ, nothing else matters before God. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters before God. Your ethnic background doesn't have a say in your salvation, nor your sex, nor your status in this life. This is because when God looks at you, He sees an heir according to the promise the Lord made to Abraham, "in you will all nations be blessed." This promised offspring was the Messiah, Jesus, Who would come through Abraham's lineage. Abraham's offspring would bless the nations by redeeming them - all people were redeemed through Jesus' death on the cross. So when a person is baptized, they are united to Christ and indistinguishable from any other Christian. And this Baptism is a free Gift, not tied to any work performed by us. God calls you His child, an heir of eternal life through the promise made to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ Jesus, your Lord.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Sixth Sunday After Trinity

JULY 12, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 5:(17-19) 20-26

Daily Lectionary: Judges 7:1-23; Judges 7:24-12:15; Galatians 1:1-24

"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus is clear: He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. And He is doubly clear that unless a person's righteousness is more than the righteousness of the leading religious leaders of the time, he will never make it into heaven. It may be easy to think you are more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees, as theirs was a self-righteousness built on following the traditions of men rather than adhering to the Law of God. But Jesus is firm: anyone who relaxes the Law of God will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. The scribes and Pharisees crafted more than just God's Ten Commandments in an attempt to fulfill the law themselves, and they failed. Jesus' words are not a dare, trying to encourage people to try harder to get into heaven. He is condemning the self-righteous sinners and anyone who would twist the Commandments of God to elevate himself as more favored by God. The stark truth is that only Christ can follow God's commands. Only He can truly be called righteous under the law - you and I will never, on our own works, make it to heaven.

And that is the point of Jesus' words. Not by our own merit can we achieve salvation. It is only by Jesus' merit, His work, that sinners can obtain eternal life. We cannot keep God's laws, and even if we were capable, we wouldn't choose to because ours is original sin - sin that we have inherited and that inhabits us all. But rather than leave us to be condemned for our own unrighteousness, Jesus stepped in to fulfill the Law perfectly and to take the punishment for sins that are rightly ours. Jesus is the only truly righteous One, and He shares that righteousness with you. In the waters of Baptism, you are united to Christ in a death and resurrection like His. When you come out of those cleansing waters, you are given the robe of righteousness, which marks you as God's redeemed child. When God looks at you, He sees Jesus. He sees His Son, Who fulfilled the Law perfectly, not for His sake but for yours. You have righteousness in Christ; your Heavenly Father will not forsake you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord of all power and might, author and giver of all good things, graft into our hearts the love of Your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Your great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Monday of the Sixth Week After Trinity

JULY 13, 2026

Today's Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

Daily Lectionary: Judges 13:1-25; Ruth 1:1-4:22; Galatians 2:1-21

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." (Exodus 20:2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The Lord tells His people Who He is and what He has done for them. He brought them out of Egypt, which included preserving them from the plagues, bringing them through the Red Sea on dry ground, saving them from Pharaoh's pursuing army, and providing them with bread from heaven and water from a rock. All of this was done so that they might be freed from the house of slavery. And now that God has brought them to the wilderness, He sets before them His Commandments. The Commandments tell us what God wants for His people. He wants to be their God alone. He wants them to love their neighbors as themselves. He desires His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. The law of God is always good, even when we do not feel good about it. As you and I know, and as the Israelites constantly showed through their time in the wilderness, we break God's law. We sin. We choose to do evil instead of good. St. Paul even says we can't do good, even if we wanted to. We are, in Paul's words, "slaves to sin." The people in the wilderness, while no longer slaves to the Egyptians, were still slaves to sin. But God did not leave them in that house of slavery either, nor has He left us to die in the house of slavery.

The hope of the Israelites and the hope of us now is in the Messiah - the Savior Who breaks the power of sin, death, and the devil. In Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness. Our sinful flesh still wages war against us, but in Christ, we are strengthened to see the Law of God as a benefit, even when it accuses us. God's will is that sinners would be forgiven. When the law presses heavily on your heart, go and receive Christ's forgiveness from your pastor. Following God's law will not save you, but Jesus already has. He is the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the house of slavery that you might live in Him, eternally.

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 579:6)

Tuesday of the Sixth Week After Trinity

JULY 14, 2026

Today's Reading: Romans 6:(1-2) 3-11

Daily Lectionary: Judges 14:1-20; Galatians 3:1-22

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:1-2)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

St. Paul is responding to a general vibe of "Well, if all sin is forgiven, then I can do whatever I want." His "by no means" is a polite way of saying, "That's not how this works. That's not how ANY of this works!" What does it mean, then, when he says, "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" He's talking about Baptism, where the old sinful self is drowned, and the new Adam is raised to life. We have been united to Jesus in a death like His that we might have a resurrection like His. Paul's point is that once a person comes to faith, everything is different. They do not act the same way or think the same way because the Holy Spirit is now working sanctification in them. What he means is this: Christians should act a certain way because Christians look a certain way - they follow a pattern. This pattern is coming from and returning to the gifts of Christ, freely given to sinners. Christians should not live in open sin - nor should they encourage others to do so. We are not competing to see who can be forgiven by God the most amount of times. That won't end well, and it's not a true representation of God's people.

We do know that even while the Baptized are sanctified saints of God, we are still sinners, and we will be in need of Jesus' forgiveness until we die. But don't go out trying to be the chief of sinners. Live as one dead to sin and alive to Christ. Live the baptismal grace of God, that all your doings, being ordered by His governance, may be righteous in His sight. You have been made new. The sin and brokenness inherent in you have been paid for by the death and resurrection of Christ. Rejoice, dear Christian, for, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

"Christ Jesus is the ground of faith, Who was made flesh and suffered death; all then who trust in Him alone are built on this chief cornerstone." (LSB 571:2)