REFLECTIONS

All Saints Day - Saturday of the Last Week of the Church Year

November 1, 2026 - November 28, 2026

Higher Things

This season's Reflections were written by

Rev. Jason Schockman, associate pastor of Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Oconomowoc, WI

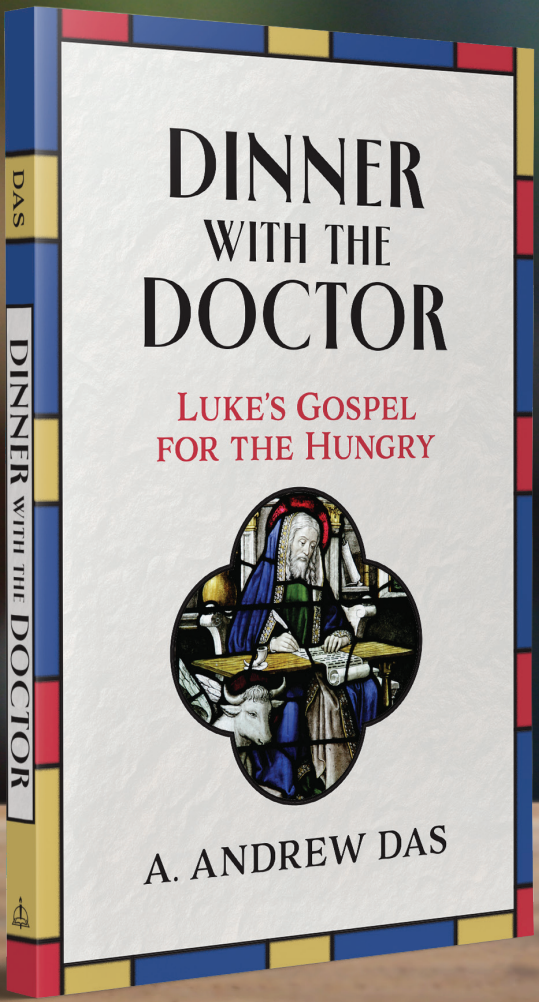
Rev. Jeremy Swem, pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, MI

Rev. Bryan Hopfensperger, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church Bergland, MI and Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Ramsay, MI

Rev. Aaron Zimmerman, pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Farnhamville, IA

©2026 Higher Things, Inc., Lisbon, IA

Explore Luke's Powerful Account of Christ



Reflect on the Gospel of Luke with author A. Andrew Das. Together, you'll unpack 23 key passages with academic clarity and accessible warmth. Both a devotional and a Bible study, this exploration of Luke's text will reveal Christ's beautiful vision of salvation.

LEARN MORE AT CPH.ORG

1.800.325.3040

© 2026 Concordia Publishing House

A Short Form for Daily Reflection

ADAPTED FROM LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK

Make the sign of the Holy Cross and say:

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

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

Read "Today's Reading" if there is one listed.

Read the Daily Lectionary selections.

Read the Reflection for the Day.

Say the Apostles' Creed.

Pray the Lord's Prayer.

Pray one of these little prayers:

(In the Morning)

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

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

(In the Evening)

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

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

All Saints Day

NOVEMBER 1, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 5:1-12
Daily Lectionary: Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Matthew 21:1-22

> *"And [Jesus] opened his mouth and taught them, saying: … 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied…'" (Matthew 5:2,6)*

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Being satisfied sounds great, but when does that happen? Even when you've had a great meal, you'll get hungry again. You did well on the test you prepared for, but another one's coming. You trained hard, ran well, and the team had a record finish, but there's another Cross-Country invitational next week. The music you've been rehearsing for months reached its resounding crescendo at last week's fall concert, and now the work begins to prepare for the next performance. Those are just some of the outward things that, even in their accomplishment, leave us wanting more. What about the friendships, or lack thereof, that always leave you wondering if you're enough. How about when you don't think you can actually put in words what you're feeling, or are afraid that if you did, no one would stick around. What are we really hungering for? What will satisfy that thirst for belonging?

The real truth is that there is only one in whom we will be satisfied- Jesus. Although you may know the joyful truth and healing balm of the Gospel, sinners still sin in thought, word, and deed. That sin in our world, even in our own sinful flesh, breaks stuff. In fact, sin breaks us too. If we are looking to be satisfied by our accomplishments or the opinion of others, we will be left with the "many who say, 'who will show us some good?'" (Psalm 4:6) But that same Psalm continues, "Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!" Jesus may well have said in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for ME, for they shall be satisfied." In Christ we find our most satisfying "highest good," and He promises to be present as He delivers His body for our hunger and His blood for our thirst.

So we gather with all the Saints where Jesus is, bringing all the sin-brokenness of our soul and declare the promise as we receive Him, "Thou, Bread of Life, alone art able to satisfy and make me whole: Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood be for my soul the highest good!" (LSB 618:1).

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy Communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Monday of the Twenty-Second Week After Trinity

NOVEMBER 2, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 18:21-35
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 1:1-19; Matthew 21:23-46

> *"Then Peter came up and said to him, 'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus must not be talking literal math here, because that would only make 490 times someone should be forgiven. If the tallies started when this 49-year-old pastor was born, and Jesus IS talking literally…YIKES! I mean, just do the math. If I've sinned ONLY 10 times a year, does that mean I've used up the forgiveness I'm supposed to receive? Clearly, that is not how God forgives.

But the question the disciples ask isn't about how God forgives but about how we are to forgive the one who sins against us. Again, Jesus must not be talking literal math here. I've been married for 26 years. If Jesus is really telling us to count up the times we've forgiven our closest neighbor, then my wife only has to forgive me about 19 times a year, and let me tell you, I've used it all up!

What Jesus is after in answer to Peter's question is illustrated by the parable that follows of the "king who wished to settle accounts with his servants" (Matthew 18:23). The king in the parable is God, who has forgiven us far more than we could even imagine. Not 490 times but every time, every sin, covered in the precious cleansing blood of the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). That makes you the servant who was ten thousand talents in debt to the king, and your friend the one who owed you a hundred denarii.

When your friend sins against you, rather than focusing on the weight of their words or the breadth of their betrayal, this parable calls you to first consider the abundant mercy of God toward you and recognize that your Holy Heavenly Father has forgiven you far more than He is calling you to forgive your friend… the comparison isn't even close.

So bring your sins to Jesus, and those sins committed against you to Jesus, and weigh them all in the limitless scale of His forgiving love for you. He can handle it, even when you can't. Jesus has already washed your crimson stain of sin in your Baptism into His death and resurrection. Let His forgiveness be the forgiveness you share. Remember who you are, a fully forgiven child of God. Which means you don't need the strength to manufacture forgiveness; you already have it.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

I lay my sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God; He bears them all and frees us from the accursed load. I bring my guilt to Jesus to wash my crimson stains clean in His blood most precious till not a spot remains. (LSB 606:1)

Today's Reading: Micah 6:6-8
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 3:6-4:2; Matthew 22:1-22

"He has told you, O man, what is good;" (Micah 6:8)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

God has told you. He has spoken clearly in His Word. We can read the text of the Scripture, and by the wisdom we find there, discern what is good. But don't go reading the B.I.B.L.E. like a set of Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. That's not the point. You won't find in its pages all the good things we have to do to be ready to live with God for eternity.

Instead, He has told us all the good that He has done for you. All the Old Testament prophets that pointed to the promises fulfilled by the Prince of Peace. The perfect life lived for you by the only human who could possibly do it because He is at the same time God and Man. The innocent death of the Lamb of God that satisfied God's holy justice and demonstrated His steadfast love for you. Jesus has justified you, made you before God to stand 'just-as-if-I'd-never sinned'. That is the Good News He has told you! Trust that Word of the Gospel. Christ's death and resurrection are what you are baptized into. The water of your Baptism was God by His word of command and promise, uniting you with the Lord of Life.

He has told you what is good...and it's not about you. O MAN! His good is totally FOR YOU, but the good is about Jesus. His justice. His kindness. What the Lord requires of you is exactly what He has already given you, life by faith in Jesus. And the reason He gives it to you is for the sake of those around you.

Luther puts it this way,

"God requires no good works from us for Himself; He wants everything to yield to the use and welfare (good) of our neighbor. The glory of such works is enough for God. Faith is the beginning of justification, as all Scripture reveals. Being justified by faith, we neither can nor should offer anything to God other than the sacrifice of praise; that is, that we bear witness with our preaching of the grace we have received, that we magnify God, that we preach His glory, and do this preaching through the Gospel. These are the 'fruits of our lips,' Hos. 14:2. Then let us show mercy to our neighbor" (AE 18:261).

And keep listening to the Gospel, which the Lord in Christ has told you is good FOR YOU!

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Called by worship to Your service, forth in Your dear name we go, to the child, the youth, the aged, Love in living deeds to show; Hope and health, goodwill and comfort, counsel, aid, and peace we give, that Your servants, Lord, in freedom may Your mercy know and live. (LSB 848:4)

Wednesday of the Twenty-Second Week After Trinity

NOVEMBER 4, 2026

Today's Reading: Philippians 1:3-11
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 5:1-19; Matthew 22:23-46

> *"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (Philippians 1:9-11)*

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

When Paul prays that the love of the saints in Philippi would abound, he's not talking about some generic "love is love" kinda love. He is specific. The love they have is the love that comes through Jesus Christ. It is His love that is given with which we love others, "we love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). His is a love that is first demonstrated by Christ on the cross even "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In Christ, God has demonstrated that He has "loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). Then He gives that love to you in a very specific, very tangible way, His Body and Blood are given and shed for you.

We have all kinds of continuously created counterfeit and corrupted kinds of "love" in this world. Paul's prayer is that you would not only know the specificity of the love of Christ for you, which is the cause of your salvation, but that in both quantity ("more and more") and quality ("with knowledge and all discernment") you would grow in the love of Christ. Abounding in this love is lived out in daily repentance, remembering your Baptism into the death and resurrection of the One who has truly loved you. Not because you've earned it, not because you deserve it, but because He freely gives it.

And that love which caused our salvation has an effect. It draws us to what is excellent and pure. The love of Christ fills us with the fruit of righteousness. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in you because you are loved by God. So we thank God that he sent his Son and demonstrated a love that is not like a Hallmark movie or simply syrupy and self-indulgent. No, Christ's love we can depend on, and we can depend on God's Word to show us what love is.

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord God, we thank You that You have taught us what You would have us believe and do. Help us by Your Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to hold fast Your Word in hearts that You have cleansed that thereby we may be made strong in faith and perfect in holiness and be comforted in life and death; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Today's Reading: Catechism: Table of Duties: To Husbands
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 7:1-29; Matthew 23:1-12

> *"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7)*

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

These are important instructions, not just for husbands but for all men, young men included. You are surrounded by women. First, your mother. Perhaps you've got sisters, and maybe even friends who are girls. There ought to be a difference, gentleman, between the abrupt video game chatter on mission in Call of Duty or Fortnite, and the respectful vocabulary you choose to use with the women around you.

Yes, the God of all creation made us male and female on purpose. Generally speaking, women are typically smaller in size and weaker in strength. That's not a bad thing, so long as you males recognize that size and strength are not an excuse to be unkind (and it doesn't matter if those women are bigger and stronger than you). Each one of them is a Gift that God has given, and one for whom Christ died. Remember to treat them as such.

Which actually makes this word to husbands really important for us all to remember. All the people we interact with, whether they are female or male, Christ died for them. The ones you like and the ones you don't like. This is where Peter's advice to husbands about not hindering prayers comes into play for all of us.

Is it easy to pray for the people that you're frustrated with? When you really don't understand someone, do you take the time to pray for them? How quick are we to remember that not only did Christ die for them, but it was God who created them in the first place? By the grace that was poured out on you in your Baptism, you can show respect for God's handiwork. In the forgiveness of Christ, we can endeavor each day to show respect for God's will, by which He created us male and female, to be husband and wife, to complement each other. For in Christ we are each, male or female, heirs of the grace of life.

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, it is Your gracious will that Your children on earth live together in harmony and peace. Teach us to examine our hearts that we may recognize our own inclinations toward sin. Help us, by Your Word and Spirit, and grant us a steadfast faith in Jesus Christ, a cheerful hope in Your mercy, and a sincere love for you and one another; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Friday of the Twenty-Second Week After Trinity

NOVEMBER 6, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 23:13-39
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 8:18-9:12; Matthew 23:13-39

> *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Matthew 23:37)*

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

What a picture Jesus paints for what he does for us. The Lord here emphasizes his good will toward us, gladly gathering us in love like a mother hen. Outside the nest, when little chickens sense danger, they run to their mother hen, trusting that she is there to cover and protect them. The mother hen spreads her wings over her chicks to protect them and, in fact, places herself between her chicks and any perceived danger. She is willing to put herself in harm's way first to protect her babies. That is Christ to whom our faith clings.

Faith does not rely upon itself, but holds to Christ, and takes refuge under His righteousness. Faith lets Christ's righteousness be its shield and protection, just like the little chicken never trusts in its own efforts, but takes refuge under the body and wings of the hen.

This image also appears in Luther's description of what he calls imputed righteousness, in which God sees us through Christ and credits Christ's perfect righteousness to us, despite the fact that we remain sinners. In Luther's Commentary on Galatians 3:6, he writes, "On account of this faith in Christ God does not see the sin that still remains in me. For so long as I go on living in the flesh, there is certainly sin in me. But meanwhile Christ protects me under the shadow of His wings and spreads over me the wide heaven of the forgiveness of sins, under which I live in safety."

Under Christ's righteousness, we creep and crouch and stoop and stumble through this life. Yet faith believes that we will be sustained not by our faith, not for our sake, but for the sake of Christ and His righteousness under which we take refuge. This is how the Psalmist says it, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress my God, in whom I trust'... He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge." (Psalm 91:1-2,4)

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

He comes with rescue speedy to those who suffer wrong, to help the poor and needy and bid the weak be strong; to give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light, whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in His sight. (LSB 398:2)

Today's Reading: Introit for Trinity 23 - Psalm 85:1, 7, 9, 11; antiphon: Jeremiah 29:11a, 12
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 11:1-23; Jeremiah 12:1-19:15; Matthew 24:1-28

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

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

It's interesting to me that the Introit for tomorrow's Divine Service skips this; "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints…" (Psalm 85:8). The truth is that the Lord has shown us His steadfast love in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. But that was about 2,000 years ago, and today we can't actually lay eyes on Him, so we must "walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Therefore, we walk by hearing, for "faith comes by hearing" (Romans 10:17). The knowledge that Christ is Lord, and in Him is our salvation, we have by hearing in faith.

We have heard He speaks peace to His people throughout the world. How does He do that? Your pastor is God's representative, when he speaks peace, absolving His saints, it is the Lord Jesus you are hearing. Hearing the voice of the Lord in His Word is marvelous. In that hearing, steadfast love has been shown, salvation has been given, but we still haven't seen it. Peter makes this clear: "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:8-9).

So we rejoice that God the Father has spoken to us, and in speaking, He has shown us his steadfast love and granted us His salvation. This is the Gospel which the Father promised through the prophets. And this speaking, this showing of His salvation, this proclamation of the Gospel, He accomplished by the ministry of the apostles. He continues to deliver the Good News of salvation in the preaching of His Gospel in truth and purity through the Office of the Holy Ministry he has given the Church.

Still, we haven't seen it…or have we? If you want to see that salvation delivered to you, go to where the Lord has promised His presence is to be found. Be gathered with His people in the Divine Service. Go to the table the Lord has prepared for you, even in the presence of the enemy (Psalm 23:5). There you will hear Him speak, "This is my body, this is my blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins." There you "taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8).

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heav'n to earth come down! Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all Thy faithful mercies crown. Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love Thou art; Visit us with Thy salvation, enter ev'ry trembling heart. (LSB 700:1)

Third-Last Sunday of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 8, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 22:15-22
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 20:1-18; Matthew 24:29-51

> *"Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

It is said that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. So the Pharisees (who despised Herod, the Herodians, and the Romans) teamed up with their enemy (the Herodians) to trap Jesus. "Tell us what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Matthew 22:17) Jesus appeared to be between a rock and a hard place. He can be an enemy of the Pharisees by saying it is lawful or an enemy of the Herodians by saying it is not lawful. Jesus was not willing to be trapped; that will happen later. Jesus said, "Show me the coin for the tax." (Matthew 22:19) Surprisingly, someone in the temple had an unclean coin to present. Jesus asked, "Whose image and inscription is this?" (Matthew 22:20). Now the tables were turned; instead of asking the questions, they must answer Jesus, so they responded that the coin bore the emperor's image.

Then Jesus said, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21) Those who sought to trap Jesus were now entangled in His words. Jesus will not be formed into an image made by man. He wouldn't allow Himself to be shaped like a piece of playdough into a Pharisee or Herodian, no matter how high the pressure got. They should have given up, but so should we. God is not to be formed into our image and likeness so that He has our political positions, our "modern" thinking, or our fleshly desires. Pay your taxes, Pharisees- render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and worship God and serve Him only- render to God the things that are God's.

Jesus entangles to release. He who is the image of the invisible God took on the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of man to destroy the true enemy, Satan. (Colossians 1:15, Philippians 2:7) He offered Himself up to Caesar's judgment, where He was found innocent yet sentenced as guilty. He offered Himself up to the Father, where He endured the sentence of the guilty yet was proven innocent, having risen from the dead. And He did it all for the sake of those who were His enemies in their trespasses and sins- Pharisees, Herodians, us. Thanks be to God, we have been released, we are no longer His enemies but His friends, and one day He shall restore His image and likeness to us.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, absolve Your people from their offenses that from the bonds of our sins, which by reason of our frailty we have brought upon ourselves, we may be delivered by Your bountiful goodness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for Trinity 23)

Today's Reading: Proverbs 8:11-22
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 22:1-23; Matthew 25:1-13

> *"[Wisdom said,] 'Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver." (Proverbs 8:17-18)*

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

What is wisdom, and where does it come from? When answering these questions, we may think about advice given by the world or from the experience of others that helps us make the right decisions when picking out classes, making and keeping friends, or planning a course for the future. Solomon, the writer of Proverbs, knew quite a bit about wisdom. At the beginning of his rule, God said he could ask for anything. Solomon requested an understanding heart that he would be able to "discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9). The Lord granted him a wise and discerning heart so that no king before or after him should compare.

In Solomon, we have an example that we should pray for wisdom, knowing God will answer and give us more than what the world expects- the ability to make decisions that will serve us well in life. The wisdom God gives enables us to rightly distinguish between good and evil. In addition to this, we should ask for the strength to choose the good and reject the evil. Solomon was wise, but the writer of 1 Kings notes, "Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done." (1 Kings 11:6) Solomon, following the wisdom of the world, became rather foolish as he worshiped the gods of the Sidonians and Ammonites.

While that was the case, in Proverbs 8, Solomon reveals something of critical importance for our understanding of true Wisdom. Initially, it appears that Wisdom is only being personified, as if Solomon is using a figure of speech to make it seem that Wisdom can speak and give counsel, insight, riches, and honor. But digging a bit deeper, we see that Wisdom is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God. He is the Righteous One who has enduring wealth. The fruit of His death, resurrection, and ascension is finer than gold or choice silver. True Wisdom is not just discerning good and evil but knowing Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, who has given us His righteousness in holy Baptism and has assured us that we are inheritors of the Heavenly Kingdom and have eternal life. Now, when you think about wisdom, move beyond the advice of the world, or experience, or Solomon, to Christ. Ponder His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and all the Gifts He gives to you from above. To know Him is to be truly wise.

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

O Come, Thou Wisdom from on high, Who ord'rest all things mightily; To us the path of knowledge show, And teach us in her ways to go. (LSB 357:2)

Today's Reading: Philippians 3:17-21
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 23:1-20; Matthew 25:14-30

> *"Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." (Philippians 3:17)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

There is an eight-year-old who imitates his older brothers. He wants to be like them, so he acts like them, though sometimes he does it to annoy them.

Some say that imitation is inauthentic, so instead, strive to be the true you. Yet following that advice, we may just end up imitating them. Would Solomon use this as an example of the saying, "There is nothing new under the sun"?

Paul doesn't take issue with imitation. He directs us to imitate him by keeping an eye on those who walk like him in Philippi. Paul's walking involves forgetting the things that are past (our failures and our sins) and looking forward to that which is to come (the resurrection of the body and the life which is to come), for the world and all things in it are passing away, but there is a day coming when all things will be made new.

Not everyone walks this way. There are some, even ones who were once in the church, that have become enslaved to the desires of the flesh. "Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things." (Philippians 3:19) It is easy to fall into this type of imitation because we allow our eyes to be fixed on passing away things: phones, social media, the next event, task, or project instead of forever things given by Jesus. We are conformed to be citizens of this world when we should, by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word, be transformed by the renewal of our minds. (Romans 12:2)

So God says to us today, "Turn your eyes here and look at My Son." Look at Jesus, who died for you yet did not see corruption in the grave. Look at Jesus, who rose for you and brought life and immortality to light. Look at Jesus, who showed His glorious body as proof to the apostles and you of the victory He has given you in your Baptism. Look at Jesus, who promises He will come again to transform your lowly body to be like His glorious body. Now it is a humble body, one that is corrupted by sin and so often drawn to things that pass away, but when Jesus comes again, whether we are living or in the grave, He will make our bodies like His glorious body. We will be free from the corruption of sin and never desire to sin again.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us for the times when we have allowed ourselves to be ruled by the desires of our flesh. Turn our eyes from the things that are passing away and fix them on You as we continue to strain forward to what lies ahead. Amen.

Today's Reading: Jeremiah 23:21-40
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 23:21-40; Matthew 25:31-46

> *"Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the Lord?" (Jeremiah 23:28)*

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

The cry of "Peace, peace" arose in Jerusalem, but there was no peace for the widow, the orphan, or the poor, for they were neglected by their kinsman. The slogan "the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord" was said as if they could worship false gods in the Temple itself instead of repenting of their sins and returning to the Lord who warned them of their destruction. These words of the ruling officials and the priests were straw, not wheat. Straw, while it is growing, looks a bit like wheat, but in the end, it isn't even a close substitute. If you were to try to harvest some straw seeds and grind them up to make flour, you'd end up with pretty lousy bread. Staw is no more like wheat than cubic zirconia is like diamond, and you can't exchange straw for wheat any more than you can exchange salt for sugar.

The words "Peace, peace" and "the Temple of the Lord" were "straw". They entrenched the people in their sins instead of turning them from their sin to God. In the end, the kings stood condemned; they would be cut off, and the Righteous Branch would be raised up to rule in their place. The priests stood condemned; they would be cast out, and the Good Shepherd would gather His people. The prophets stood condemned; the dreams they shared were from the imagination of their own hearts, but one day the Word made flesh would share the word faithfully.

What are the "straw" words that you hear? In addition to your flesh and the devil, who cries "Peace, peace" or "the Temple of the Lord," so that you would persist in your sin? Who wants you to be consumed by the desires of the flesh?

Flee from them. Come hear faithful pastors who give you Jesus. They assure you that Jesus is God's Son who was crucified for your sins and raised for your justification. Jesus is the grain of wheat who fell into the ground to bear much fruit in you. (John 12:24) Jesus is the true bread from heaven who gives life to you and the world. (John 6:33) Jesus gives you His body under bread and blood under wine to forgive you.

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, Your name is holy in itself. Let Your Name be kept holy amongst us also as Your word is taught in its truth and purity. Give us Your Holy Spirit and strengthen us that we may lead holy lives according to Your word, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen (First Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Meaning)

Today's Reading: Catechism: Table of Duties: To wives
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 25:1-18; Matthew 26:1-19

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:22)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

The Table of Duties includes passages of Scripture identifying the responsibilities of holy orders and positions, but not the ones that were thought to be holy in Martin Luther's time. Gone are the vocations of priests, monks, and nuns who left the holy order of the family to serve themselves through man-made rule or code. Luther raised up the maligned vocations of father and mother, son and daughter, and husband and wife, for these are holy vocations given by God with good works clearly defined by the scriptures.

Since Martin Luther's reordering of things, marriage should have been highly regarded, especially in the church, for it is meant to be a beautiful picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church. Still, it has not fared well in our day. Perhaps it is because, in too many marriages, we see the pain and suffering of hurt people hurting people. We could respond by saying, "What should we expect when two sinners are put together under one roof?" As Christians, we must expect more, and that more is found in repentance and Absolution, which provides restoration and reconciliation, and then direction from the scriptures in what the relationship should look like.

Wives are to submit to their husbands.

Initially, this may sound demeaning or humiliating, but it must be taken in the context of the relationship of Christ and the church. Look at the love of Christ for His church. He offered Himself up to abuse, rejection, and a bloody crucifixion to save the first wife, Eve, who didn't submit to her husband's instruction not to eat from the fruit of one tree, to the first husband, Adam, who should have defended Eve from the evil one. And then, He saves all of us who have chosen our own way and rejected His Commandments as good, right, and holy. He has risen to cleanse us with water and the word to present us as His spotless bride and nourish us as His own body. We submit to His love, receiving His Word, His forgiveness, His life. Submitting ourselves to our Groom is not demeaning or humiliating; it is His work to honor us. So also when wives submit to their husbands' acts of love and self-sacrifice, they are being honored. When wives entrust themselves and their lives to their husbands, they are revealing the trust we in the church have placed in Christ. What beautiful, good, and holy work.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks for giving us the vocations of sons and daughters. Bless all husbands and wives deepening their love for one another day after day. Strengthen all wives that they may submit to their husbands and all husbands that they like Christ would love and give themselves up for their wives through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Today's Reading: Jeremiah 26:1-19
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 26:1-19; Revelation 13:1-18; Matthew 26:20-35

> *"But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to speak all these words in your ears." (Jeremiah 26:14-15)*

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Jeremiah, the prophet of the Lord, was about to be put to death for proclaiming that Jerusalem would be like Shiloh. Wait, what? What's the big deal with Shiloh? Shiloh was once the location of the Tabernacle of the Lord, the dwelling place of God on earth, but He had abandoned it because of the unfaithful priests Hophni and Phineas, the wicked sons of Eli. (1 Samuel 2-5) The Ark of the Covenant, the altar, and all the other items of the Tabernacle were eventually moved to Jerusalem during David's reign, and Solomon then built the Temple of the Lord. Fast forward a few centuries, and you find the people again are unfaithful, so the Lord warned them through the prophet Jeremiah that unless they turned from their evil ways, Jerusalem would be desolate.

Our flesh doesn't like to hear the Law, so we can either remove ourselves from it or kill the messenger. The priests and prophets of Jerusalem responded by seizing Jeremiah to kill him. Jeremiah could have said "just kidding" or "I didn't mean it." Instead, he commended himself, his body, and all things into the Lord's hands as he told them, "Do what you think is right, but if you kill me, you've brought innocent blood on yourselves."

The officials of Judah spared Jeremiah's life, but the One who came after him would die. The priests and teachers of Jesus' day responded to the Law He preached through the silence of death. The mob called for His crucifixion, and the official Pilate was unwilling to preserve Jesus's innocent life. The crowd called out, "His blood be on us and on our children." (Matthew 27:25) They were guilty of shedding His innocent blood, but so are we for every time we've ignored His Word because it was inconvenient or silenced His Word because it seemed our flesh had a better word. But, God be praised, that innocent blood shed for us is the very blood that cleanses us of our arrogance, pride, and self-centeredness. Jesus' innocent blood takes away our unrighteousness. Jesus' innocent blood poured into our mouths forgives us.

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect, 3rd Sunday in Lent)

Saturday of the Third-Last Week of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 14, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Trinity 24 - Psalm 95:1-4; antiphon: Psalm 95:6-7a
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 29:1-19; Revelation 14:1-20; Matthew 26:36-56

> *"Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand" (Antiphon for the Introit for Trinity 24)*

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Come, worship, bow down, kneel before me. That is what my flesh says. Can't you see how important I am, how hard I work, and how tired I have become? Arrange your schedule and your life around me.

Incurvatus in se- I am curved inward, looking at myself instead of looking outward toward God or my neighbor. Augustine and Luther recognized this not just as a "me problem" or a "you problem," but as a mankind problem. It is as old as sin- we thought we could be like God by eating, so of course, all people, all creation should come, worship, bow down, and kneel before me.

But we're not God. God is holy, and we are sinners. God is eternal, and our flesh is like the flower of the field; we wither and decay. God sacrifices Himself for the sake of His sheep, and we want everyone to sacrifice themselves for our sake.

God calls out, "Repent. Turn away from the empty life of self-idolatry. You are one of My people, a sheep of My hand."

We hear this in Psalm 95 this Sunday and whenever we sing Matins. The Good Shepherd calls us to come into His presence to worship, bow down, and kneel before Him, but we also hear why we should, for this is the right response to His tender care for us.

Your Good Shepherd, Jesus, laid down His life for your sake and picked it back up again to give you life abundantly. (John 10:11) He nourishes you in the green pasture of His Word as you come into His presence. He fills you full of forgiveness, life, and salvation through His proclamation, "Your sins are forgiven, your guilt is atoned for, your shame is covered!" He gathers you up into His arms and reminds you, "You have eternal life in me." He defends you from the devil, the world, and your own flesh, promising that you are a sheep held tightly in His hand, and nothing can snatch you away from Him. O yes, let us come, worship, bow down, and kneel before our Good Shepherd who loves us and gave Himself for us.

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

We sing to You, O Lord, making a joyful noise to You with songs of praise. Forgive us for the times when we've worshipped creatures, the creation, or ourselves instead of You. As our Good Shepherd continues to feed us in the pasture of Your Word and on Your Body and Blood, where we are forgiven, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Second-Last Sunday of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 15, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 9:18-26
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 30:1-24; Revelation 15:1-8; Matthew 26:57-75

> *"And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His garment..." (Matthew 9:20)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Faith grabs hold of Jesus and does not let go. Learn from the faith of this nameless woman! She had suffered for many years, but upon hearing of Jesus, she made her way to Him. But she couldn't get close enough to speak to Him, much less touch Him. The Evangelist Mark tells us that there was a great crowd gathered around Him as He went with Jairus to restore his daughter. This woman was just not able to get to Jesus for healing - but look what she does! She isn't about to leave. She knows what she's heard about Jesus... she trusts that He is the long-awaited Savior, from the people of Israel. If she could just get close enough even to touch His garment, she trusts His goodness and kindness will be for her, too.

Matthew adds a wonderful bit of information: the woman touched not just Jesus' garment, but the fringe of His garment. (This was the purple-hued fringe that all the people of Israel were to wear on their garments as a reminder that the King of kings would come from their own people.) The woman who touched Jesus' garments touched that specific portion: the fringe. She knew and believed that Jesus is the King of kings and Savior of all mankind - but by faith she knew Jesus was her King and her Savior. If getting down on her hands and knees to crawl through the crowd meant that she could touch the fringe of Jesus' garment, then that's exactly what she would do. She made her way to Him and touched the fringe, and instantly she was made well.

Learn from this woman! She is your sister in faith. For the woman, it was the crowds that might have kept her from Jesus. What is it for you? Seriously consider your life and determine what is keeping you away from Jesus. Confess it and be strengthened in His forgiveness. Like your sister in faith, let nothing keep you from your King and your Savior. Use the rapidly approaching season of Advent to double down on your efforts to have even more Jesus.

In Jesus, there is healing, health, and compassion for you, too. You may be just one in a crowd of people, but you have Jesus, and Jesus has you. You may be a nameless no one in that big crowd, but you are named with the name of the Triune God in Baptism. So take heart. Your faith (your Jesus) has saved you.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Blessed Lord Jesus, grant to us, Your people, ever-greater trust in You and ever-greater determination to let nothing keep us from hearing Your Word and receiving Your Supper. For Your own name's sake we ask it of You. Amen.

Monday of the Second-Last Week of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 16, 2026

Today's Reading: Isaiah 51:9-16
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 31:1-17, 23-34; Revelation 16:1-21; Matthew 27:1-10

> *"I, I am He who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass?" (Isaiah 51:12)*

In the Name ✣ of Jesus. Amen.

Who are you? You are the direct lineage of Adam and Eve. You are fallen from the perfection and holiness in which God originally created humanity. You are turned inward upon yourself, naturally seeking only yourself. You are not God, but you think you are (or at the very least, would certainly do a better job at it than He.) You do not seek Him for help but trust your own wisdom, know-how, and abilities. You delight in hearing the thoughts and counsel of your own head rather than hearing His Word.

Who are you? You are rebellious against everything and everyone that has authority over you. You are murderous in your thoughts towards those around you. You are impure, unclean, and unchaste with respect to your body and the bodies of others. Your reputation is your first priority so that others' can be mud in comparison. You are always wanting more and more of that which is not yours, thinking that more means happiness.

Who are you? You are all of these things and more. That is who you are by nature, by birth. You don't have to be taught any of these things by others; you come by them naturally.

But that is not what you are in Jesus. In Jesus, you are cleansed, restored, forgiven, and set free! In Jesus, you are re-created to be a son or daughter of His own Kingdom, with hearts and minds re-created in His own image. In Jesus, you are new. In Jesus, you have all things - even life after the grave.

In Jesus, you have no need to fear those who cannot harm you. (Do you think that even if your life is ripped away from you that God cannot restore it?) "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28) And He who can destroy the body and soul is for you, not against you. Who are you? You are His. Do not be afraid.

In the Name ✣ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, You have baptized and cleansed us, re-creating us according to the image of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Work in us courage and assurance that since we are Yours, we have nothing to fear. Hear us for Jesus' name's sake. Amen.

Today's Reading: Colossians 1:9-14
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 33:1-22; Jeremiah 34:1-36:32; 45:1-51:64; Matthew 27:11-32

> *"...So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..." (Colossians 1:10)*

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

The Christian life is more than believing a certain set of truths while rejecting other false beliefs. We are given to walk in the newness of life that we have in Jesus. This, of course, is a way of referring to our conduct in this world. Our behavior. God has created us anew, washed us clean, and set us free in our Baptism. Having our hearts and minds made new, we are to conduct ourselves according to what God instructs us is good and right and holy. We are to walk in the light, as He is in the light. (1 John 1:7)

The darkness is a place of slinking and skulking; of not walking with God or even to God, but away from Him. (This is exactly what Adam and Eve did after they sinned.) We must no longer walk in that darkness, walking knowingly and willingly in trespasses and sins, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:1-2. That is what we once were - it is not what He has created us to be now.

But so often our feet are stuck in the muck and mire of the old, the past, the darkness. God's Word teaches us the right thing to do, but our feet do not want to walk in it. God's Word instructs us in the right thing to say and the holy things to think, but our feet so often almost seem to love to be stuck in the old! Lord, have mercy on us! Cry out with the psalmist, your brother in the faith: "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" (Psalm 51:10)

And He does. He cleanses you and restores you. He loves to forgive and restore His children who cry out to Him with broken, penitent hearts. He does not snuff out a smoldering wick, and He will not snuff out you. In Jesus and His forgiveness, He sets your feet, once again, upon the Way. "You have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life." (Psalm 56:13)

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Today's Reading: Matthew 27:33-56
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 37:1-21; Revelation 17:1-18; Matthew 27:33-56

"Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54)

In the Name ✣ of Jesus. Amen.

Was and is—past tense and present tense. The centurion was as much wrong as he was right. What the soldier sees there in front of him is the Son of God, hanging dead on the cross. He sees a lifeless body on the two sticks of wood - but he knows what he's looking at is not like the other two bodies. This one, which he rightly acknowledges, is different.

Of course, the soldier couldn't see it by looking at Jesus' dead body. He didn't look any different than any other dead body the soldier might have seen. It was by what he had heard about Jesus and even heard from Jesus while he hung on the cross, suffering and dying. The soldier came to believe this man who was dying was the Son of God.

But if Jesus is only "past tense," then He is not present tense. Or future tense. Jesus is the one who is, was, and is to come. (Revelation 1:4) If Jesus was the Son of God (and only "was"), then it is of no use to you now. If Jesus was the Son of God, then He is not alive now, and your faith is useless, as Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 15. If Jesus was the Son of God, and nothing more than "was" then even He is caught in a lie, saying that He would rise up after being dead. The centurion was right, if he went by what his eyes saw. Jesus was—end of story. But Jesus is not dead. He is alive and reigning over all things for the sake of His Church. He is. And He will be... forever!

Truth be told, you haven't even seen what the centurion saw. You hold it true by faith, worked in you by the Holy Spirit, that Jesus was. And is. And is to come. By faith you believe Him present in His Word, when it is read and preached to you. By faith you believe Him present in His Holy Supper for you, present to forgive your sins and strengthen you in the faith. By faith, you trust that Jesus will be victorious over your death and your grave. By faith you trust that Jesus will return in glory on the Last Day and usher you into His Father's eternal kingdom.

Jesus is the Son of God. He has been from all eternity, and will be to all eternity. For your sake.

In the Name ✣ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus, give me faith to trust all the more that You are truly alive and truly present for me in Your Word and Sacrament, and that You will never stop being the Son of God, my Savior! Amen.

Today's Reading: Catechism: Table of Duties: To Parents
Daily Lectionary: Jeremiah 38:1-28; Jeremiah 39:1-44:30; Matthew 27:57-66

> *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)*

In the Name ✣ of Jesus. Amen.

Training is difficult! When I was in high school, I had a silly thought that I could play basketball. Now, this wasn't about to happen because I have the coordination of an ox. That wasn't about to stop my dreams, though, so I joined the team. We practiced. And practiced. And practiced! I had no idea why we did something called "running suicides" - all I knew was that we all hated doing them! Then we would run up and down the bleachers just hoping that we wouldn't miss our footing and knock our shins.

I had no idea why we did all of those exercises in torture. But the coach did. He knew that we wouldn't last in a game if we didn't build up our endurance. You can't run five miles if you aren't able to run one mile. You can't run up and down the court for the entire game if you can't make it through the first quarter. Lungs and legs needed to be worked. Conditioned. Trained.

It's no different in our lives as Christians. We need regular and diligent training. We aren't equipped to handle today's temptation if we haven't endured temptation in the past. Our Father disciplines us as His children, out of love. Our earthly fathers are given to do the same. It is never pleasant as it is happening, but it is always for our good, so that we may endure all things.

In this world, we suffer for the name of Christ. It's nothing new; Jesus said it would be this way. (Matthew 10:22) The training and building up that we endure is so that we may remain steadfast. Have we failed in doing so? Yes. We are weak. But flee to Jesus! He is the one who forgives, and He is the one who strengthens. Listen to the words you hear at His altar this Sunday. They are for you, that you may endure. "The Body and Blood of our Lord strengthen and preserve you to life everlasting."

In the Name ✣ of Jesus. Amen.

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

Today's Reading: Matthew 28:1-20
Daily Lectionary: Daniel 1:1-21; Matthew 28:1-20

> *"And when they saw Him they worshiped Him, but some doubted." (Matthew 28:17)*

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

They worshiped; some doubted. To doubt is to have two minds about something. You know "this" about a thing, but think "that" in the back of your mind, like a ball of thoughts being tossed back and forth in your brain. Tossed this way, it is fact, and that way is fiction. Some of the disciples, we're told, ended up holding with the ball of fiction. (Interestingly, this is exactly the picture Luke paints for us when he tells us that Mary "pondered" the visit of the shepherds when Jesus was born. She, quite literally, threw the events and the things they said back and forth in her mind [the word he uses is where we get the word ball from!]) She threw the things back and forth in her mind, but for her the result was not doubt but faith.

Doubts plague our minds and hearts. We hear one thing from God's Word, but then other things work to convince us that it cannot be true. (Or at least not true for us.) "Your sins are forgiven." "But I know what a rotten thing I am; I cannot really be forgiven." "I will never leave you nor forsake you." "But I certainly don't see His presence in my life." "This is the Word of the Lord." "But that video on YouTube was pretty convincing that it's all just made up."

The theological terms here are magisterial (master) and ministerial (servant). We must use our reason only as a humble servant of God's Word and not as a master over it. (See Mary's response in Luke 1:38.) But what do we do when the doubts arise in us? What do we do when truth and lies, fact or fiction, are being tossed around in our minds and hearts? Look to the example set by those who have gone before you. Learn from your brother in the faith in Mark 9:24. Learn to pray: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." And the Lord, who loves to answer the prayer of His people, will not turn you away. Let your weakness drive you to prayer… because He who once was dead but is now alive forever can not only hear your prayers, but will answer your prayers. And He delights to answer the prayers of His people who come to Him seeking more of Him! Yes, even yours.

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus lives! To Him the throne high above all things is given. I shall go where He is gone, live and reign with Him in heaven. God is faithful, doubtings, hence! This shall be my confidence. (LSB 490:2)

Today's Reading: Introit for Last Sunday of the Church Year - Psalm 39:4-5, 7-8; antiphon: Isaiah 35:10
Daily Lectionary: Daniel 2:1-23; Revelation 18:1-24

"Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!" (Psalm 39:5)

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Sometimes you're able to see your breath. Sometimes you're not. Think of that... you can catch a glimpse of an unseen thing! But even when you can't see your breath, it's still there. I suppose that's the way it is with our own lives. When we're younger, the truth that we are going to one day be at the end of our lives seems unthinkable and about as 'unseeable' as your breath on a summer day. It's the furthest thing from your mind. There are other times, though, when it becomes pretty clear: you're getting older, and one day your life will come to an end. You're here, and then you're gone. Pretty sobering, isn't it?

The end of the church year is also a reminder that all things come to an end. And yet in Jesus, the end is not really the end, is it? At the end, Jesus makes His advent in glory. He comes to make the end of all things the ushering in of the beginning of all things made new. The liturgy of the church year, then, can help us understand the "liturgy" of our own lives. Even as our lives and our bodies crumble apart and come to an end, they will be restored and made new. The end is not the end in Jesus. He comes with healing and restoration of all things ruined by the Fall.

And take heart! He comes to you even now with healing and restoration! He comes to you now in His Supper and in His Word. He sanctifies you with His own Body and Blood, refashioning you according to His own image. As you wait for the end of this present age - or the end of your life, whichever may come first - Jesus has recreated you so that you may live each day in righteousness. As Psalm 39:5 tells us, our present lives are nothing more than a breath. But in Jesus, we have received the breath of God that has breathed new and unending life into us. "Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15)

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

I am flesh and must return, to the dust, whence I am taken; but by faith I now discern that from death I shall awaken with my Savior to abide in His glory, at His side. Glorified, I shall anew with this flesh then be enshrouded; in this body I shall view God, my Lord, with eyes unclouded; in this flesh I then shall see Jesus Christ eternally. (LSB 741:4,5)

Last Sunday of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 22, 2026

Today's Reading: Matthew 25:1-13
Daily Lectionary: Daniel 2:24-49; Revelation 19:1-21

> *"And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut" (Matthew 25:10)*

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

The door was shut. The door is the door to eternal life. Once shut, it shall never be opened again. Meaning there is a time of grace. A time to be ready. But once that time is over, there is no going back. The question is: When at last God shuts the door, on which side will you be? There are only two options.

The first option is to be on the outside with the foolish virgins. There are 10 virgins in the story. They look the same outwardly. They all have the same lamps. They all fall asleep. They are all together in the same house waiting for the bridegroom. The bridegroom is Jesus. In other words, these ten are all waiting for Christ. But only five of them have oil. Otherwise, from all outward appearances, they look exactly the same. The foolish who took their lamps but no oil are those who have the outward form of Christianity but not the inner life. They lack the inner spiritual life that Christ gives. They may consider themselves Christians, but sadly, they are not. They lack faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit, whom Christ gives you through your Baptism and His Gospel.

The second option is to be on the inside. To be with the five wise virgins. To have enough oil. The oil is living faith in Christ and the new spiritual life the Holy Spirit gives you. Jesus tells this parable because now is the time to get the oil. Faith and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are not something you can come up with. Jesus gives you this oil through God's Word and Sacraments. The foolish virgins had neglected God's Word. They heard it, but it never took root. Baptism and the Gospel are the source for your oil. It's where the Holy Spirit promises to work in you, filling you up. Hear God's Word and take it to heart. Live in your Baptism as His blood-bought child. Receive the oil of the Holy Spirit and faith so that your wick may be burning for when the Bridegroom comes. You will be on the inside with Christ in the eternal joy of the great wedding feast.

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Lord God, heavenly Father, send forth Your Son, we pray, to lead home His bride, the Church, that with all the company of the redeemed we may finally enter into His eternal wedding feast; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (LSB Altar Book, H88)

Monday of the Last Week of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 23, 2026

Today's Reading: Isaiah 65:17-25
Daily Lectionary: Daniel 3:1-30; Revelation 20:1-15

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth..." (Isaiah 65:17)

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

In these verses, God promises that He will make a new heavens and a new earth when His Son returns to judge the living and the dead. Specifically, God gives you five promises:

First, He promises that "the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind" (v. 17). The "former things" are all the sins, heartaches, pains, and sorrows that we have on this present earth. All griefs shall be forgotten. All pain removed. All memories of sin and evil. Gone.

Second, God says that the greatest blessing of eternal life shall be the mutual love that God will share with you and you with Him (v. 18-19). The New Jerusalem is the body of Christ. It's not a literal Jerusalem, but the church, the body of believers. You will take joy in seeing God and being with Him (v. 18), and your Triune God will take joy in being with you (v. 19)! God has made you for this purpose. He has made you for the purpose of sharing His eternal love and joy!

Third, God promises that eternal life shall never end! When Isaiah writes that a young man shall die a hundred years old, he is speaking poetically or metaphorically. God is promising you that Jesus will defeat death forever!

Fourth, God promises that all feelings of futility shall be removed (v. 21-23). Building a house, but someone else lives in it; planting a vineyard, but someone else is enjoying the fruit, makes it feel like everything is pointless. As King Solomon expressed it in Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities...All is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). God promises that in the new creation, life shall not be burdensome nor shall it feel pointless or meaningless. Living in the new heavens and new earth shall fill you with meaning and purpose in Christ.

Fifth, God promises that before you call, He will answer (v. 24). In the new heavens and new earth, you will see God face to face. You will be seeing Him with your very own resurrected eyes in your resurrected body!

Lastly, God promises in verse 25 that in the new creation there shall be perfect peace. The wolf and the lamb shall dwell together. Paul says in Romans 7 that the greatest burden we believers have is the sin within us still. Our sinful nature is like a lion or wolf, aggressive and fierce. Your greatest burden, the sin within your heart, shall be gone, and all of us believers in Christ will be perfectly peaceable and kind. In the new heavens and earth, you will be transformed and changed into the perfect image of Christ!

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

O Jesus Christ, do not delay, But hasten our salvation. Amen. (LSB 508:7)

Tuesday of the Last Week of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 24, 2026

Today's Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Daily Lectionary: Daniel 4:1-37; Revelation 21:1-8

> *"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*

In the Name ✣ of Jesus. Amen.

As the Last Day approaches, encourage one another. There are plenty of earthly encouragements out there. The whole self-esteem and self-help movement will give you plenty of earthly encouragements, but in the end, they fall short of what your soul truly needs. You need the encouragement that Christ gives you in His Holy Word. You need true encouragement that uplifts the soul. In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, the hope and expectation of Christ's return gives you three true and lasting encouragements.

The first encouragement that we are given is that the Day of the Lord will not be a surprise to us. Paul says in verses 1-4 that no one knows when Christ will return again. But when He does return, it shall not be a shock to us. It's what we have been waiting for all along! The Day of the Lord is not a scary or gloomy day for us believers, but a day of joy! A day of joy because you have been prepared for this day by your Loving Lord.

The second encouragement Paul gives us is that we have been made children of God and children of the light in our Baptism (v. 5). We do not live in the darkness of fear and despair. Nor in the darkness of sin and death. But in the healing light of Christ (v. 6-8). You belong to the day, not to the night. This is who you are in Jesus! Therefore, let us not fall asleep spiritually. Let us not become weighed down by all the worries and concerns of this earthly life. Let us not become apathetic about Christ and His Word. Instead, let us be sober and awake to the temptations and attacks of Satan.

The last encouragement is that God has not destined or chosen you for wrath (verses 9-10). God has chosen you for salvation. The whole purpose of His Son's death is so that you might receive His forgiveness and live with Him forever when He comes on that great Day of the Lord!

The Day of the Lord is a day of encouragement. A day that keeps our eyes focused on Christ and on eternity. A day that will not surprise us but will be a day of light and life. A day which we rejoice over and look forward to, for it gets us through all the other days in the meantime. Amen.

In the Name ✣ of Jesus. Amen.

My Savior paid the debt I owe And for my sin was smitten; Within the Book of Life I know My name has now been written. Amen (LSB 508:5)

Today's Reading: Revelation 21:9-27
Daily Lectionary: Daniel 5:1-30; Daniel 7:1-8:27; Revelation 21:9-27

> *"Then came one of the seven angels who had seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me saying, 'Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb'" (Revelation 21:9)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Revelation 21 is about eternal life. It's about the New Jerusalem, Jerusalem the Golden. The New Jerusalem is not a physical city. It is the bride of Christ, the wife of the Lamb. This chapter is a golden chapter on the glory of eternal life with Christ.

The city has the glory of God, for in eternal life you shall be glorified. The city has a great high wall. The high wall symbolizes security. You will be secure and safe in Christ. There are a lot of twelves in this city. Twelve is the number for the church. All believers in Christ, both from the Old Testament and from the New Testament, will be there in eternal life with the Lamb of God.

John sees an angel measuring the city. The measurement is 12,000 stadia. 12,000 is 12 times 10 cubed. Twelve again is the number of the church. Ten is a number of completion. The 12,000 stadia, then, symbolizes the complete number of people in eternal life. All who died a blessed death of faith in Christ shall be there. 12,000 stadia also means that the city is huge. There is plenty of room in eternal life for everyone who believes in Christ. Jesus says in John 14:2, In my Father's house are many rooms.

The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold like clear glass. The streets of the city are also pure gold. Jasper and gold are costly. Eternal life is a precious treasure. It's expensive and costly, for it cost the blood of the Lamb to buy it for you. It's pure gold. Eternal life is pure. There is no sin, no mixture of evil in it, for we will be made pure.

Then John lists all the precious stones that adorn the foundations of the wall and the city. The gold, the gems, the pearls all foreshadow the glory and the beauty of eternal life with God. The city has no temple in it for God. The Lamb is the temple, meaning you will have direct access to God. There will be no moon or sun, for the glory of God shall be your light. The gates of the city will never be shut, never locked, for there is nothing to fear—only perfect peace with our Loving Triune God.

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest— The promise of salvation, The place of peace and rest— We know not, oh, we know not What joys await us there: The radiancy of glory, The bliss beyond compare! (LSB 672:1)

Thanksgiving Day

NOVEMBER 26, 2026

Today's Reading: Luke 17:11-19
Daily Lectionary: Daniel 6:1-28; Daniel 9:1-27; Revelation 22:1-21

> *"...and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan" (Luke 17:16)*

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Ten lepers are healed. One returns. One comes back. "Where are the other nine?" asks Jesus. Only one returns to give thanks to Christ. Gratitude to Christ comes out of faith in Christ. We give thanks to Christ in three ways.

First, we give Him thanks by remembering Him. To give thanks requires someone to give thanks to. If all we have here on earth was simply by random luck, there would be no point in giving thanks. True gratitude needs someone to be grateful to. Think over all that Christ has done for you. Remember, He is the one who has blessed you. Be like that one Samaritan leper who came back and fell at Jesus' feet and worshipped Him!

The second part of giving thanks is to realize that all you have comes by His grace. Grace means God's free favor; His undeserved love and mercy. The lepers all cry out to Jesus in our Gospel reading to heal them, to have mercy on them. Jesus has mercy; He graciously heals them. Gratitude or thanks comes out of grace. We often think of grace when it comes to our salvation. We are saved by grace through faith. The Bible defines grace in Romans 11:6: "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace." Grace is the basis of your salvation. God saves you by grace. Out of grace and love, He sends Jesus to earn forgiveness for you. By grace, you are given the Gifts of faith and Christ's forgiveness through the Gospel, Absolution, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. But not only is your salvation by His grace, so all your earthly blessings are by His grace alone. We don't deserve a single good thing from God. But He gives you all spiritual and earthly blessings out of His grace towards you in Jesus. Gratitude comes out of grace.

Lastly, we give thanks to Christ by remembering to love Him, the Giver, more than the earthly gifts He gives us. This is what happened to the nine lepers who didn't come back to give Jesus thanks. The other nine lepers only cared about being physically healed. They loved the earthly gifts and earthly blessings more than Jesus the Giver. We give thanks to Christ by loving Him more than the earthly things He blesses us with.

In the Name ✢ of Jesus. Amen.

Now thank we all our God With hearts and hands and voices, Who wondrous things has done, I whom His world rejoices; Who from our mother's arms Has blest us on our way With countless gifts of love And still is our today. (LSB 895:1)

Friday of the Last Week of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 27, 2026

Today's Reading: Catechism: Table of Duties: To Children
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 1:1-28; 1 Peter 1:1-12

> *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and your mother'—which is the first commandment with a promise—'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-3)*

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

God interacts with His creation in two ways: directly or indirectly. God interacted directly with His creation through miracles, inspiring the prophets and apostles to write the Bible, sending His Son to save you, and so on. God also interacts with His creation indirectly, or through means. Christ comes to you through the means of Word and Sacrament to give you faith, forgiveness of sins, and new spiritual life. He also comes to you indirectly to bless you with physical or earthly Gifts. This is the point of the Fourth Commandment. The purpose of parents, along with all types of authorities (civil authorities, parental authority, or spiritual authority, i.e., pastors), is for Christ to come to you through these means to preserve you physically and/or spiritually.

Luther's Table of Duties in the Small Catechism recognizes this order and purpose of authority which God has built into His creation. In the Table of Duties, the vocations all come in pairs. You have the one who is in authority and the one under authority. The one who is in authority is to use their authority to care for the one under authority. Authority in Scripture is not a chain of command but a transmission of blessing. Christ wants to use authority and those in authority to bless and serve you!

Parents stand in the place of Christ. When you obey your parents, you are actually obeying Him! The Table of Duties teaches you how to concretely love God and love your neighbor. How do you love God and love your parents? By honoring them and obeying them as long as what they say is not sinful. How do they love you? By bringing you up in the instruction of the Lord, caring for you, and teaching you discipline so you can live a self-controlled life. Christ uses your parents (despite their sins and failings) to show His love for you here on earth.

The Fourth Commandment is the First Commandent with a promise. God's Laws are built into His creation. To follow this commandment of obeying parents and earthly authorities means that, in general, you will have a better earthly life. Not always, but in general. We give thanks to Christ, who loves us so much that He serves us through the vocation of father and mother!

In the Name ☩ of Jesus. Amen.

"You are to honor and obey Your father, mother, ev'ry day, Serve them each way that comes to hand; You'll then live long in the land." Have mercy, Lord! (LSB 581:5)

Saturday of the Last Week of the Church Year

NOVEMBER 28, 2026

Today's Reading: Introit for Advent 1 - Psalm 25:4-5, 21-22; antiphon: Psalm 25:1-3a
Daily Lectionary: Isaiah 2:1-22; Isaiah 3:1-4:6; 1 Peter 1:13-25

"Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame" (Psalm 25:3a)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

To be ashamed is to be embarrassed. There are different types of embarrassment. We have all done things or said things that made us embarrassed. Gave the wrong answer in class. Said something dumb with our friends. These are simply social mistakes that cause a brief moment of embarrassment but are forgotten, or we look back upon and laugh at. But even worse than social embarrassment is the shame of sinning against someone. We look back on our lives and are ashamed of something we said or did that was so cruel, mean, and vindictive. We remember the look of hurt on the other person's face. We wish we could rewind the clock and undo the damage that we did. Or there is the shame of realizing one's sin against God. We realize that God is holy and righteous, and we are unholy and unrighteous. Like Peter, we may cry out to God, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8) or we may in shame say with Isaiah in the throne room of heaven, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5). But there is another type of shame or embarrassment. Shame that comes from being proven wrong. Embarrassment about confidently saying something is true or right or will happen, but then it doesn't happen, or you discover it wasn't true after all.

Psalm 25:3a is talking about these last types of embarrassment. When you die, you will not be put to shame. Your hope and confidence in heaven, the resurrection of your body, and the new heaven and earth shall be realized. You will not be embarrassed to discover everything you believed in on earth was wrong. No, Jesus doesn't lie! He always keeps His promises! Nor will you stand before the Judgment Seat of God ashamed of your sins. Like Peter and Isaiah, the blood of Christ has atoned for your sins and clothed you with His righteousness. Through faith in Christ and His death, your sin and shame are covered and will not be exposed to the eyes of all. "For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame'" (Romans 10:11).

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Bold I shall stand in that great day, Cleansed and redeemed, no debt to pay; Fully absolved through these I am From sin and fear, from guilt and shame. (LSB 563:1)

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

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

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

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

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

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