

REFLECTIONS

TRINITY 4-8

JULY 10 - AUGUST 13, 2022



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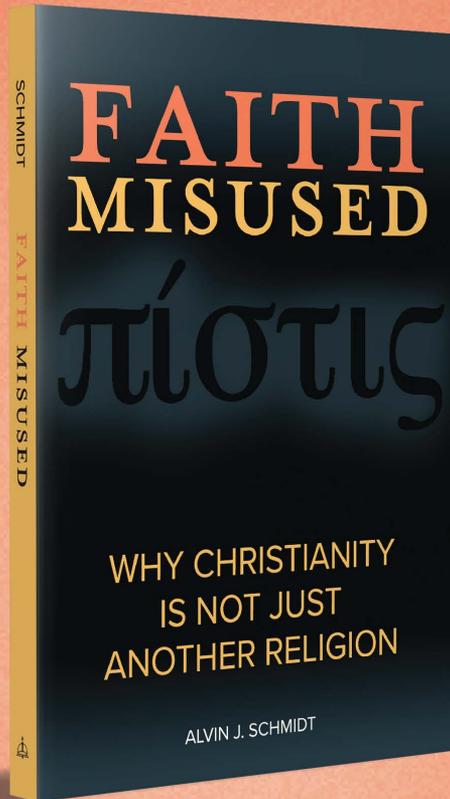
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A Short Form for Daily Reflection

ADAPTED FROM LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

Make the sign of the Holy Cross and say:

In the name of the Father, † Son, and Holy Ghost. 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 Thee, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray Thee to keep me this day also from sin and all evil, that all my doings and life may please Thee. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the Wicked 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 Thee, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast graciously kept me this day, and I pray Thee to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the Wicked Foe may have no power over me. Amen.

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

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

JULY 10, 2022

Today's Reading: Luke 6:36-42

Daily Lectionary: Judges 6:1-24; Acts 14:19-15:4

"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

(Luke 6:36)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. We judge everything, everywhere, all the time. Do you like the food you eat? Do you like the outfit your friend is wearing? Do you agree with the post you just read? Every day we determine whether we like things or not, or if someone is right or wrong. Our lives are filled with constant judging.

Judging, if done in light of the teachings of the Holy Scripture, is not a bad thing. We are told, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). All of us are called by God to search the Scriptures and to use this knowledge and the teachings of Christ to judge right from wrong.

However, there is a difference between using the measure of God's Word to judge and using our own measure. As sinful and selfish creatures, we want what we think is best for us and care little for the good of our neighbor. Often our heart's desire is contrary to the things of God. We condemn and judge on the basis of our authority instead of realizing the truth that all people are under the judgment of Holy Scripture. When this happens, we are no longer being merciful. Instead, we are condemning our brother for a speck, all the while ignoring the logs in our own eyes. This is wrong, it is sin, and we need to confess our transgressions to the Lord.

The psalmist writes, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Psalm 103:8). The mercy of the Father and the love that He had for His fallen creation is what brought Christ to earth. Jesus came, took our sins, received our punishment, was judged in our place, and died on the Cross so that we might receive everlasting mercy. Because Christ shed His blood for you, you are no longer condemned. Forgiven by God, we are now to show mercy and to forgive in the same way.

What a great gift we received from the hands of Jesus! Using the same measure that we have received, we may—by faith—love, forgive, and live as God intends us to. 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.

(Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity)

Monday of the Fourth Week after Trinity

JULY 11, 2022

Today's Reading: Genesis 50:15-21

Daily Lectionary: Judges 6:25-40; Acts 15:6-21

"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 hated him. They hated his dreams, his coat, his status as the favorite, and they especially hated his tattling. The brothers hated him, so they cast him into a dry well, sold him into slavery in Egypt, and convinced their father that he had been killed by a wild animal. In Egypt, Joseph was wrongly accused and placed in prison. At the death of Jacob, the sins of the brothers were once more brought to remembrance, and Joseph was finally free to pay them back for their mistreatment.

Our sinful flesh understands vengeance. We cling to it. We naturally react to hurt and to pain by lashing out at those who wronged us. We feel a need to get even. We want our pound of flesh and to give back as good as we got. So it is not a surprise that Joseph's brothers were worried. As the second-most powerful man in all Egypt, Joseph was capable of doing anything he wished to settle the score.

However, by faith and the working of the Holy Spirit, Joseph clearly saw the good that had come about in his life because of his brothers' actions. In the midst of great evil, God had worked through His servant Joseph to bring about the salvation of his people. Joseph did not negate the sins of his brothers, but he was willing to forgive them. This forgiveness came only by the grace and mercy that God had first given to Joseph. In 1 John 4:19 we are told that, "We love because God first loved us." And this love comes by the blood of Jesus shed on the Cross for all of our sins. Joseph knew the promise of the coming of the Messiah; he awaited it. And it was this faith that enabled him to forgive and to love those brothers who had done such evil to him.

You, too, are loved by God. Always remember that for those who love God, "all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). These words bring us comfort and peace as we live in a world filled with evil and sin. No matter what problems we face, our heavenly Father will work it out for our good because of Jesus. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, help us to remember that Your almighty hand works all things for our good, not only here and now, but forever in heaven. Amen.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week after Trinity

JULY 12, 2022

Today's Reading: Romans 12:14-21

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

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

(Romans 12:18)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. In the twelfth chapter of Romans, Paul writes to the church in Rome and to us about how we are to act and live in the midst of trials. As believers in Christ, the Church will always face hardship and persecution. Just as the world hated Jesus, the world will also hate all of us who follow Him. Because of this reality, we must prepare ourselves for what will come upon us so that we are able to give a faithful witness to the hope that is in us.

The problem is that our sinful flesh does not want to live at peace. When we are mistreated and when evil is done to us, we want to get even. By nature we strike out against and impose our own vengeance upon those who have wronged us. Getting even feels good, and the sense of accomplishment that we get when we put someone in their place often leads us to do it again. However, this is sinful. It is not the example that Jesus has given to us, and as we have just read, it is not how the people of God are called to live. So by faith we must repent of our sins. We must confess to the Lord that we have failed to live in peace and that we have often repaid evil with evil. We must confess that we have failed to let the light of Christ shine forth through us.

Jesus came to earth to forgive all who have done evil. His death on the Cross and the shedding of His blood brought forth our forgiveness. When Jesus received evil at the hands of all sinners, He overcame it by good. He is the perfect example for us who have been called by faith. This is how we are to live. When we are mistreated and when evil is done to us, we are to overcome it with good. With the help of God, we discipline our flesh and pray for those who have done harm to us. We pray for God to grant them the peace He has given to us. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we ask that You would grant us Your peace so that we might live at peace with those who have done wrong to us. Help us be shining lights of the love of Christ so that the hearts of our enemies might be turned to You. Grant all this we pray for the sake of Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday of the Fourth Week after Trinity

JULY 13, 2022

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Introduction to the Lord's Prayer

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

Our Father who art in heaven.

(Small Catechism: Introduction to the Lord's Prayer)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Martin Luther writes that God invites us to believe that He is our true Father. Have you ever thought about what this actually means? You are a child of the Almighty. Of all the people on the earth, the Lord chose you. As an enemy of God who was dead in your sins, you have done nothing to earn this right. Instead, this relationship between God and man can only come from above. Our heavenly Father alone is the actor, and we are the receivers.

Think about our life here on earth. You and I do not get to choose our fathers. We do nothing to be conceived in our mothers' wombs. Instead, God created us, and He alone provides us with parents. Just as we have not chosen our earthly fathers, we don't choose our heavenly Father. In mercy, God calls us by faith. He makes us His by the Word, a precious gift given by the working of the Holy Spirit.

This faith unites us with Jesus, the beloved Son of the Father. When this happens, we are crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20), we are united with Jesus, and we receive the forgiveness of all our sins. Purified by the blood of Jesus shed on the Cross, we are now at peace with the Father, and we are viewed as beloved children of God. It is this work of Jesus done on our behalf that enables us to ask our dear heavenly Father with all boldness and confidence for the things that we need in this life.

What a great and precious gift, that is freely given to you by your Savior! No longer do we need to fear the wrath of God or the punishment for our sins. Instead, you and I are part of God's chosen family, brothers and sisters of Christ, who have been called by the Holy Word of God. We have a relationship with the Father that allows us to bring to Him all of our concerns, problems, requests, thanks, and praise, knowing that our heavenly Father will hear, listen, and give to us all that we need to support this body and life, not just on earth but also forever in heaven. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the great gifts of love and mercy that You give to Your children each and every day. Help us to be ever mindful of the fact that You have chosen us to be Your children, so that we may boldly pray with confidence in the knowledge that You will hear and help us. Amen.

Thursday of the Fourth Week after Trinity

JULY 14, 2022

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

But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

(Galatians 3:22)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. In Galatians 3, Paul teaches about the Law and the Gospel. In order to understand the Bible, we need to be clear on the distinction between the two. The Bible was written in order that we might have an account of who man is and what he needs. According to Galatians 3:22, the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin. This came about when Adam and Eve desired to be like God and ate of the fruit that they were commanded not to touch. From that moment forward, everything on earth was held captive by sin. Death reigned, and all who failed perfectly to live up to the teachings of God's holy Law were dead in their trespasses. This is the state all of us are in, for the Law clearly shows us our sins. It tells us what we have done and left undone. Left in that condition, we would be enemies of God and would receive the punishment of hell on account of our sins. What a horrible state in which to live!

However, God loved His creation. He loved us, so He made a promise long ago that One would be born who would save His people from their sins. These words are the message of the Gospel. Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise. Jesus came, and by His death on the Cross, He offered up the eternal sacrifice for sin. We are justified by faith, and the promises of God have come true. The Gospel is that Jesus died for you and that on account of His blood shed on the Cross, all your sins are forgiven. This is the promise that is given for all those who believe. This is your promise. Because of Christ, the promise has now been fulfilled. We are children of Abraham and offspring of the promise. We have received Jesus through Absolution, through preaching, and by the Sacraments. These great blessings are ours by faith, and for these Gifts, we give thanks to God. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Father in heaven, we give thanks to You for Your words of Law that show us our sins and drive us to despair of ourselves. And we praise You for the words of the Gospel that give us Jesus who has bought us with His precious blood. Continue to keep us in the true faith so that we might at the Last Day hear the voice of our Savior calling us to be with Him. Amen.

Friday of the Fourth Week after Trinity

JULY 15, 2022

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

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. How often have you waited with eager expectation for something? Maybe it was a birthday, spring break, or Christmas. How did you feel? Did your expectations for that great day keep building until you couldn't wait anymore? I imagine that most of us at one time or another have been so excited for a day to arrive that we could hardly stand it. But no matter how much we tried, we could not make time go by faster to speed up the arrival of the special day.

This was exactly how the people of God felt throughout the entire Old Testament. From the moment the first promise of the coming of the Messiah was made, the people watched, waited, and longed for Him to come. Days passed, years came and went, and then at just the right moment and exactly when the Father wanted it to happen, Jesus came. God sent His Son into a world filled with sin. Jesus was righteous and holy, yet He was born under the Law. Born a man just like all of us, the Son of God lived under the Law. Perfectly fulfilling all the commands of God, He did everything we could not. Suffering and dying in our place on the Cross, your Savior paid the price so that you might be received into the family of God.

Jesus has forgiven you of all your sins. Now you are part of God's family. Because Jesus has fulfilled the Law for us, we are no longer slaves to it. Now, because of Christ, we are free to live as sons of God. This means that by faith the new man in us desires to love and serve God and to love and serve our neighbor. We do this by following the Law of God. However, we are still sinners, and this means that as long as we live on earth, we will daily fail to follow the Law. We still need Jesus, and because the fullness of time has come, He is here for us. When we return to our Baptisms each day, we receive forgiveness from Christ, and this is the greatest gift we can ever receive. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we give thanks to You for sending forth Your Son, Jesus our Savior. Please keep us strong in the faith so that we might live and serve You. Amen.

Saturday of the Fourth Week after Trinity

JULY 16, 2022

Today's Reading: Introit for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity

(Psalm 27:1a, 11-12, 14; antiphon: v.7, 9b)

Daily Lectionary: Judges 16:4-30; Galatians 4:12-31

*O, you who have been my help, forsake me not, O God of my salvation!
The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*

(Introit for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The Introit for today is from Psalm 27, which is a psalm of David. David was well aware of the work of the Lord in his life. From an early age, David had been watched over and cared for by God. With God's help, David was able to defend his father's flock from the lion and the bear. With the assistance and protection of the Lord, David was able to defeat Goliath. It was God who kept David from the hands of King Saul, and it was the Lord alone who made David king over all Israel. All the days of David's life, the Lord was with him, and by faith David was able to recognize it and give thanks for it.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" Like David, we can give thanks to God for the protection, peace, and life that we have been given. By faith we, too, know that all things come from the gracious hand of our heavenly Father. Our daily cry needs to be, "Forsake me not, O God of my salvation!" For the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh are constantly trying to get us to forget God and to live as we want. If we were alone in this struggle, we would fail.

But we are not alone. Jesus is the salvation that has come for us. He alone has paid the price for our sin and given to us forgiveness and life in His Name. When Jesus died on the Cross, all our sins were forgiven, and because Christ rose from the grave, we shall also rise. It is only by faith which comes from the Word that we can continue in the way of the Lord. The Word of God alone is the level path that leads us to the knowledge of the truth.

In this life we will face many adversaries, and all of them seek our death. However, like David, we have One who is gracious and merciful. It is because of Jesus that we need not fear anything in the world, for He is our light and our salvation. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, teach us Your way and continue to lead us on Your path. Help us to wait for You in the day of trouble and to take courage in Your promises. For the sake of Jesus we pray. Amen.

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity

JULY 17, 2022

Today's Reading: Luke 5:1-11

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

*But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying,
"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8)*

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. The calling of the first disciples has always been a fascinating story for me. The fishermen's day was over. They were getting ready to head home and go to bed after failing to catch anything the whole night. The frustration and plain old tiredness must have pushed them to the very brink. One can almost hear the sarcasm and rising anger in the voice of Simon: "Master, we have toiled all night and took nothing!" After all, the fishermen of Galilee know that you do not catch fish with a net during the day. However, there must have been something about this man Jesus. Maybe it was His voice that commanded attention and obedience. Simon listened and obeyed.

You know what happens next. The nets are filled to breaking. The men call for backup, and the catch is so great that both of the boats begin to sink. Simon realizes that he is standing in the presence of the Lord because only God can do such great things. Simon's revelation, a gift from the Holy Spirit, immediately leads him to the only place that anybody can go when standing in the presence of God. Falling to his knees, he confesses, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."

This, too, must be our confession when we come into the presence of God. Today, as we do every Sunday, we gather in church before the presence of the almighty God. We join with all fellow believers in saying, "I, a poor miserable sinner." We confess that we do not deserve to be in the presence of the Lord, for sinners cannot remain before God.

Christ hears this confession and speaks words of comfort to us just as He spoke to Peter. "Do not be afraid," and "I forgive you all your sins." What a gift you and I have received from Jesus on account of His sacrifice on the Cross! Like Peter, we are followers of Christ, blessed children of God who are now able to live and serve God in this life. 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 toward 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.
(Collect for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity)*

Monday of the Fifth Week after Trinity

JULY 18, 2022

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

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 1:21-2:17; Galatians 6:1-18

And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, the sound of a low whisper. (1 Kings 19:12)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. The appearance of the Lord to Elijah in 1 Kings is not how I would come if I were God. If I were God, I would come in the earthquake and the fire. The full glory of my power would be displayed so that Elijah and the whole world would feel, hear, and see my divine majesty and power. The coming of the Lord should be an event that stops everything and makes everyone take notice. I would come with a vengeance, blasting everyone and everything that fails to do and live as I command. It's probably a good thing I am not God!

In 1 Kings, the Lord comes to Elijah, not in an earthquake or fire but in the sound of a low whisper. And what's even more amazing, Elijah recognizes the Lord in the small, quiet sound. He wraps his face and goes out of the cave to listen to and receive God. As one of the greatest prophets, Elijah knew by faith that God works in ways beyond our understanding. The Lord comes often to the world in ways that the world considers weakness. A great example of this is Jesus' death on the Cross. The world looks at this event and cannot imagine how it accomplishes anything. Death is viewed as the ultimate weakness, yet God's power is greatest in the death of His Son. It is by Jesus' death on the Cross and His resurrection that all our sins are forgiven and we are made alive.

The smallest whisper from God comes to Elijah that day with a message of hope and direction. This same whisper speaks to us through the pages of Holy Scripture. In a world filled with fires, earthquakes, and great noise, it is only by faith that you and I can stop looking at the world and quiet our hearts and minds to hear the whisper of God. This Word of God will always bring us peace, joy, and contentment, things we need so that we might set out each day doing the things God wants us to. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we live in a world filled with distractions and turmoil. Help us to listen for Your quiet whispers so that we might find forgiveness, life, and direction in Your holy Word. Today and everyday, continue to pour out Your blessing upon us so that we might live as obedient children, trusting in You. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

Tuesday of the Fifth Week after Trinity

JULY 19, 2022

Today's Reading: 1 Peter 3:8-15

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

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

(1 Peter 3:15)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. In 1 Peter 3, we are told how a believer in Christ is supposed to think, act, and live. What a list of expectations we are to follow! How are you doing? Do you show brotherly love? Are you humble? Do you keep your tongue from evil? Sadly, I know all of us have to confess that we are not good at doing these things. Our sinful flesh does not want to turn from evil. There is many a day that we cannot even go one hour before we fall into sin. So it is important that we always confess our sins and turn to Jesus because He alone can forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Then, as a forgiven sinner who has been washed in the blood of the Lamb shed on the Cross, we can once more go forth and honor Christ, living by faith and doing the things that the Holy Spirit has prepared for us each day. One of the greatest things that we Christians can do is to share the reason for the hope that is in us. This simply means that you have the privilege of speaking about Jesus. You may share with your friends, with your family, with everyone the message that while we were yet sinners, Christ came and suffered and died so that we might be forgiven and brought into the family of God. This is the message we have to share with those who have not yet heard.

Peter tells us to do this sharing with gentleness and respect, for we who have been forgiven greatly by Christ know how important it is to speak with love and concern to those who have not yet heard the message of the Gospel. In this way, our words and our actions will mirror Christ and the message that He has for those still lost in sin. It is a message of love, forgiveness, and peace. Share that message as you are led by the Holy Spirit. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

God, thank You for the forgiveness that You have given to us by Jesus' death on the Cross. Help us each day to live as You desire us to, sharing the hope that is in us so that all might come to a knowledge of Your truth. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

Wednesday of the Fifth Week after Trinity

JULY 20, 2022

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism*: First Petition of the Lord's Prayer

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

God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

(Small Catechism: First Petition of the Lord's Prayer)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. God is holy, so His Name is always holy on account of who He is. Yet Martin Luther teaches us that we have a responsibility to keep God's Name holy. How can we do this? We can only do this by remaining in the true Word of God. How does this happen? Well, it happens when all of God's Word is taught exactly as God intends it to be taught.

The problem we face as churches and as individuals is that our sinful flesh does not ever want to hear the truth. You see, the truth revealed in Holy Scripture shows us our failures. It reveals our sins. It tells us that God does not want us to live as selfish individuals who only think about our own pleasure. The Law of God is intended to kill us, and we don't want to die. That is why it is a struggle to listen to the truth.

This difficulty is one of the reasons so many churches distort, change, or ignore portions of the Bible and instead teach some other nonsense. In so doing, they lead people astray and profane the Name of God.

By faith we pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name." The Holy Spirit alone has the power to lead us to hallow God's Name. It is only by faith that you or I can hear and believe all that the Law has to say to us. Then, as we come to a knowledge of the truth, we are able to confess our sins and turn to Jesus, for He alone can forgive our sins.

As forgiven children of God, we are called to live holy lives according to the Word of God. All of us do this when we continue steadfast in the Word, listening to what it teaches and doing what it says. As long as we sinners are here on earth, we will continue to do this imperfectly. But because of the sacrifice Jesus offered up by His death on the Cross, we continue to be forgiven of all our sins. So we daily must return to our Baptisms, and there in the water and the Word, we arise new men in Christ, forgiven always. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Heavenly Father, help us daily to hallow Thy Name. Protect us from all that would dishonor You and lead us to study Your Word with open hearts and minds. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

Thursday of the Fifth Week after Trinity

JULY 21, 2022

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

*Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you
and your household."
(Acts 16:30-31)*

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. The jailer thought he had failed in his duty. As a Roman jailer, your life was over if your prisoners escaped while in your custody. This man was about to kill himself for his failure when Paul cried out to him. What a sweet message those words of Paul were to a man lost and without hope! This sinner realized that Paul and his companions were proclaiming a message of life and hope to those who were as good as dead. The cry of "What must I do to be saved?" is a cry that all who have been killed by the Law utter. For the Law always leads us to despair of ourselves, to see the gravity of our sins, and to look for help.

At this point, when we are dead in sin, the Gospel can come and save us. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." The proclamation of the Gospel to the jailer and his family immediately led to Baptism. This man and his whole family received the washing and rebirth that comes to all sinners, regardless of age, when the Word of God is connected to simple water. This water is transformed into a life-giving water that gives faith and life to all who receive it.

The Gift that was given that day to the jailer is also given to you. While you are dead in your sins, God calls you by name. He washes you. He makes you alive. He forgives all your sins. He makes you holy. This Gift you receive because of Jesus and the sacrifice that He offered on the Cross through His innocent suffering and death for your sins. Because Jesus has risen from the dead, you also will rise and live with Him in heaven.

Rejoice in that Gift and believe that the words and promises of God are for you, not just today, but every day of your life. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Dear Lord, awaken us that we may be prepared to receive your Son with joy when he comes and to serve him with a pure heart. Graciously hurry the coming of that day. Bless and prepare us with wisdom and strength that in the meantime we may walk wisely and uprightly. May we joyfully wait for the coming of your dear Son and so depart from this valley of sorrow. Amen.

(Luther's Prayers, ed. Herbert F. Brokering. Augsburg Fortress, pg.106)

St. Mary Magdalene

JULY 22, 2022

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

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher) (John 20:16)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Mary Magdalene received a number of blessings from the Lord Jesus. In Luke 8:1-3, we read about how Jesus healed her by exorcizing seven demons. Once this miracle happens, Mary follows Jesus, and the blessings continue to come as she listens to the teachings of her Lord.

Then in John's Gospel, we read that Mary is the first person to see the resurrected Jesus. At first she does not recognize Jesus. Maybe the tears, and the fact that she was an eyewitness to His death on the Cross, have so clouded her vision that the empty tomb, the angels, and even the appearance of Jesus Himself cannot cut through the sadness that fills her being. Mary is seeking a dead body, for she saw it taken down from the Cross. This living man standing before her could not be Jesus, so he must be a gardener.

Mary only knows the truth when she hears, "Mary." The voice of her Savior is unique, it is powerful, and it has authority. Jesus speaks one simple word, and Mary knows who He is. And all is now good. Jesus, who died on the Cross for the sins of the world, is now alive, and He comes with life and salvation.

Like Mary, all of us have received blessings from the Lord Jesus. Jesus called you by name. In Baptism He spoke your name and brought life, hope, and salvation to you. No longer are you dead in your sins. Now, because of Jesus, you are forgiven. The blessings of the Lord do not stop with Baptism. Weekly the Lord comes in bread and wine, and at the altar you receive His very Body and Blood, a blessing that forgives your sins, strengthens your faith, and preserves you all the days of your life.

One day we will once again hear the voice of our Savior Jesus. On that day, He will call us by name, and we will arise from our graves to live and serve Him forever in Paradise. 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. Amen.
(Collect for St. Mary Magdalene)

Saturday of the Fifth Week after Trinity

JULY 23, 2022

Today's Reading: Introit for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity

(Psalm 28:1-2, 7; antiphon: v.8-9)

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 6:19-7:17; Acts 19:1-22

To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. (Psalm 28:1)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. David tells us that the Lord is his rock, his fortress, and his stronghold, the One to whom David turns when he is in need. David prays that the Lord will hear him. If the Lord does not act, then David will go down to the pit, the grave, and he will die. These pleas for mercy come from the heart and mind of one who was painfully aware of his sinfulness. David knew his faults, and by faith, he knew that God alone could save him.

In verse 7 we read, "The Lord is my strength and my shield." This is a good reminder for us because the Lord alone is our strength. He is the shield that not only protects us in this life, but also gives us life.

Like David, we are sinners. Our lives are filled with things we should not have done and things we should have done. We have failed to keep the commands of God, and without Jesus, we would go down to the pit. The wages of sin is death, and we can only be made right with God by the blood of Jesus shed on the Cross for us. Jesus our Savior died and rose from the dead, so we now have forgiveness and life in His Name. This mercy of God comes to us by faith, and it makes us alive so that we trust in Him and are strengthened in this life.

The Lord is your rock. He is the stronghold of your life. He is not silent to us. No, the Lord speaks to us through His Word when we read it. His voice comes to us in church through preaching and teaching. The Lord's Word is proclaimed by the Absolution and when you receive the Body and Blood of Christ. All of these good things are poured out by the One who is never silent, for the Lord hears the prayers of His people and shows mercy to all who cry out to Him. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, continue to hear the prayers of Your servants. Help us always to remember that You alone are our rock and our shield. Thank You for the forgiveness and life You give to us through Your Son, our Savior Jesus. We ask that You help us each day to live and serve You as obedient children. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

JULY 24, 2022

Today's Reading: Matthew 5:17-26

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

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matthew 5:17)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. The "Law and the Prophets" are the whole Old Testament: every rule, penalty, prophecy, and promise, and even all the weird stuff, like that rule about not boiling a young goat in its mother's milk (Exodus 23:19). Not an "iota or dot," that is, not even the tiniest letter or point of punctuation, is to be removed. Far from relaxing even one commandment, Jesus intensifies them all. Take the Fifth Commandment. You might say to yourself, "I'm no murderer. If there's one commandment I've surely kept, it's the fifth!" Then Jesus teaches you that the minute you got angry with your sibling, or insulted someone on social media, you became a murderer (Matthew 5:21-22).

So, "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." There's no watering down God's requirements to something "doable." The Gospel is not, "We're all sinners but God loves us anyway," as if God were not serious about His requirements. No, you must become more righteous than the most righteous people you can imagine. In Jesus' day those were the scribes and the Pharisees. Actually, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Thank God, that's what JESUS came to do: not to abolish the Law or the prophets, but to fulfill them, perfectly, right down to iotas and dots, even the really weird, obscure stuff. (That's right, Jesus showed His respect for God's gift of life to animals by never boiling a young goat in its mother's life-giving milk.) You might say, "So what if He kept them perfectly? I haven't!" True, you haven't, but He has, for you. Not only the rules and regulations but also the penalties. That's what He was doing on the Cross—taking the penalty you deserved into Himself. In Baptism you are joined to Him. The perfect obedience He rendered and the penalty He paid count for you. Scribes and Pharisees trust their own righteousness. You trust Christ's righteousness given to you in Baptism, and that is a far greater righteousness. 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.

(Collect for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity)

St. James the Elder, Apostle

JULY 25, 2022

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 10:37)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. James and John didn't know what they were asking. They imagined that Jesus, the Messiah, would come into His kingdom in a big, grand, and glorious way, and they wanted in on the action—power, glory, and popularity before men. We crave these things as well, wanting to be liked and glorified by our peers, measuring others' approval by the number of likes on our latest social media post or latching on to the popular people at work or school, hoping to share in their glory.

But Jesus is not the way to earthly glory. Instead, those who trust in Jesus are more likely to be hated by the world. All of Jesus' disciples would drink the cup of suffering and be baptized in their own blood at the hands of their persecutors. James, who is remembered today, was the first apostle martyred for the faith, beheaded by King Herod—grandson of the Herod who attempted to murder Jesus in His infancy (Matthew 14:1-12 and Mark 6:14-29).

Jesus' glory is completely different. His glory is His mercy and grace for undeserving sinners like James and John—and you. His glory was to drink the cup of God's anger that sinners deserved and to be baptized in blood as God's fiery wrath toward sinners was poured upon Him on the Cross. As King Jesus hung upon His royal throne, others were present at His right and His left. Strangely, two robbers received this honor (Mark 15:27). For "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

The glorious ones in Christ's kingdom are not the wealthy or famous or popular. The glorious ones in Christ's kingdom are the ones for whom He died: Sinners, robbers, those without a shred of personal worthiness or goodness, who deserve no glory, but are glorified by Jesus' forgiveness, who are baptized in His Name and who drink the eucharistic cup of His Blood. Those two robbers stand for you. You are the glorious ones, made glorious by Jesus' redemption. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

O Lord, for James, we praise You, Who fell to Herod's sword; He drank the cup of suffering and thus fulfilled your word. Lord, curb our vain impatience For glory and for fame, Equip us for such sufferings As glorify your name.
(*"By All Your Saints in Warfare" LSB 518, st.21*)

Tuesday of the Sixth Week after Trinity

JULY 26, 2022

Today's Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

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

*"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. Before the Law is given, the Gospel rings forth. God reminds His people that He is their God and they are His people. He chose them to be His own. He delivered them from their slavery in the land of Egypt—a testimony of His love for them. The Ten Commandments, then, are not a list of arbitrary rules handed down from some distant, uncaring, "cosmic kill-joy god." They are the rules and statutes laid down by a loving Father for His own children. These commandments are good, each reflecting God's own goodness. They outline the good life according to God's design, protecting and upholding God's good gifts to us. Our creator God knows what is good for us, and when we keep these commandments, we are truly blessed, and also are a blessing to others.

As our loving Father, God is also very serious about these commandments. They reflect God's holiness. They are not a collection of "divine suggestions." Your Father really wants you to lead a holy life, for your own sake and for the sake of others. When you fail to do so, God's good commandments condemn and convict you, showing how you have fallen short in your love for God and for your neighbor. By this word of Law, your loving Father disciplines and chastises you. "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Hebrews 12:6).

Do not despise the discipline of the Lord, but confess: "I, a poor, miserable sinner..." You can speak this truth, because your Father is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:8-10). Instead, He deals with you according to His Son, Jesus, who alone obeyed every commandment, and paid the ultimate price for sinners. On Thursday we will see how Baptism unites you to the perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice of Jesus, setting you free—free to be all that Christ has declared you to be. Now, in that freedom, you love the Law and strive to obey your loving Father who has given these commandments to you. 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.
(“The Law of God Is Good and Wise” LSB 579, st.6)*

Wednesday of the Sixth Week after Trinity

JULY 27, 2022

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism: Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer*

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

Thy kingdom come.

(Small Catechism: Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. God's kingdom does not consist of a land with borders, a castle or palace, or an earthly ruler enthroned with a scepter in his hand, wearing a golden crown and royal robes. God's kingdom is Jesus. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Luke 17:20). As He said these words, Jesus was literally standing "in the midst" of a group of Pharisees, so when He said, "The kingdom of God is in your midst," He was referring to Himself!

The Pharisees weren't praying for God's kingdom to come—at least, not in the Person of Jesus Christ. The kingdom came to them without their prayers. They would reject and crucify their king, but He would still be their king. His royal scepter would be a reed, His crown a crown of thorns, and His royal robes a blood-soaked purple robe of mockery and shame. The Cross would be His royal throne, and from there the riches of His kingdom would be bestowed upon all mankind.

You do not make Jesus your king by your prayer or decision. Some Christians imagine that Jesus can't be your king until YOU "make Him the Lord of your life," as if Jesus were incapable of being your king until you "let" Him be. Jesus is already the King of kings and Lord of lords. He rules over all creation by His divine power, and He will rule in glory for all eternity. You don't make Him your king; He makes Himself your king. That's what happened when you were baptized. Jesus, your king, chose you to be His own, to live under Him in His kingdom, the Church, which is His own Body, in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

That's what we're praying for in this petition. We're thanking King Jesus for making Himself our king and we are asking our king to defend us from the evil one, provide for us the gifts of salvation, give us the Holy Spirit and the gift of faith, and rule in our hearts and in our lives until He comes again in glory. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Your kingdom come. Guard Your domain And your eternal righteous reign. The Holy Ghost enrich our day With gifts attendant on our way. Break Satan's power, defeat his rage; Preserve your Church from age to age.

("Our Father, Who from Heaven Above" LSB 766, st.3)

Thursday of the Sixth Week after Trinity

JULY 28, 2022

Today's Reading: Romans 6:3-11

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

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Through Baptism you are united with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. His death counts as your death, and His resurrection is the certainty of your own resurrection.

There's no doubt that you deserve to die. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Just one sin, one little white lie, one selfish thought, one slip of the tongue...just one of these deserves death, eternal death. If you think this is unjust, it simply proves again the depth of your rebellion against your creator. You're so sinful you think it's no big deal! So yes, you deserve to die.

One way or another, you will die. If you die going your own way, you die forever. But there's another way to die, without dying forever. Paul speaks of it in Romans 6. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3). This means that God's gift of Baptism has bridged the gap between you and Calvary. Jesus' death is now your death.

It's as if you were there with Him as He hung on that Cross, as He gave His last breath. It's as if you were the one there dying for your sin. On the Cross Jesus was carrying the sins of the whole world. All God's wrath, all His anger over your sin, was taken out on Jesus, and He died. Your death is no longer required as payment for your sin, all because you are joined to Jesus in Baptism.

But wait, there's more. Jesus died, but He didn't stay dead. Paul goes on to say, "If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." If His death is your death, certainly His resurrection is your resurrection. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). Your death will be "but a slumber" (LSB 938:1). No need to fear death. Your death will be like His. Your death will end in resurrection and eternal life. And all because you are baptized! 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 heavenly Father.
(*"All Christians Who Have Been Baptized" LSB 596, st.4*)

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany

JULY 29, 2022

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 14:47-15:9; Acts 24:1-23

“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.”

(John 11:10)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Today the Church commemorates three siblings and friends of our Lord: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany. Jesus had friends! Sometimes we forget that. But Jesus calls His disciples “friends” (John 15:15). And Jesus had other friends as well, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus included.

In the two famous accounts of Jesus’ interaction with these friends, we see Jesus doing the kinds of things friends do. He visits Mary and Martha for a dinner party (Luke 10:38–42) and teaches them an important lesson about the priority of hearing His Word. Later, Jesus grieves over the death of their brother Lazarus (John 11). We can relate. We’ve probably all been over to a friend’s house for dinner, and many of us have grieved the death of a friend.

Can you imagine what it would be like to have Jesus as your friend? He who fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes might be a pretty awesome dinner guest. And look at what Jesus did for Lazarus, raising him from the dead! (Read John 11 for the whole story.) Being friends with Jesus is a wonderful thing!

You might think, “I could never be Jesus’ friend. He’s so powerful and holy, and I’m a dirty, rotten sinner. Even if He were my friend, I would just let Him down.” And there’s a lot of truth in that, for in your sin, you made yourself His enemy. You broke the relationship and betrayed your friend. There’s nothing you can do to ever make that right. Only Jesus can.

You have failed, but Jesus was faithful. “Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6–8). You have no truer friend than Jesus, who loved you while you were His enemy and gave His life for you. And He has made you His friend by the gift of faith.

One day soon, you will sleep as Lazarus slept. But fear not! Jesus, your true and faithful friend, who is the “resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), will come to awaken you to eternal life. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Thee will I love, my life, my Savior, Who art my best and truest friend.
Thee will I love and praise forever, For never shall thy kindness end. Thee
will I love with all my heart—Thou my redeemer art.*

(“Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower” LSB 694, st.2)

Saturday of the Sixth Week after Trinity

JULY 30, 2022

Today's Reading: Introit for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity
(Psalm 47:3, 6-8; antiphon: v.1-2)

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 15:10-35; Acts 24:24-25:12

Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.
(Psalm 47:1-2)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Americans have a hard time with the idea of God as our king. We threw off the rule of King George III in the American Revolution and haven't had a king since. We red-blooded, freedom-loving Americans wouldn't want a king, either. And there are some good reasons for that. Samuel warned the people of Israel about the negative consequences of having a king over them (2 Samuel 8:10-18). Jesus acknowledges that earthly kings often abuse their authority: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you" (Matthew 20:25). When sinful men are given that much power, there is always a temptation toward corruption and tyranny. The annals of history are filled with stories of wicked kings.

Is that the kind of king God is? Certainly not! Our God and king does not rule over us for His own gain or benefit. He does not abuse or take advantage of His subjects. He has no sinful nature to tempt Him to corruption or tyranny. Our God who is love (1 John 4:8) has committed Himself to us, and uses His almighty power for our benefit and for our good. To have such a king is a blessing, not a curse. So when you think of God as king, remember that He is king in the very best sense of the word, a king who provides for His people, who defends them from their enemies, and who fights for them, giving them victory over their foes.

In fact, the most helpful way to think of God as king is to look to Jesus Christ. Learn from Him what a good king is. See how Jesus, the compassionate king, provides for His people as you read tomorrow's account of the feeding of the 4,000. That was but a preview of the ultimate provision of salvation and eternal life that His reign will bestow on His people. For Jesus will come into His kingdom on the Cross, and there win the victory for us over sin, death, and the devil, providing for us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Here is truly a king worth praising! In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

*Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; To His feet your tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, Evermore His praises sing: Alleluia,
Alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.*

("Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven" LSB 793, st.1)

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity

JULY 31, 2022

Today's Reading: Mark 8:1-9

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

"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. Speaking of kings (see yesterday's *Reflection*), here we see Jesus, doing what good kings do: providing for His people in their time of need. Jesus has gone into the wilderness and crowds have followed Him, eager to hear His words of eternal life. In their eagerness, they took no thought for their own provision, and now they are in danger of fainting from hunger on the way home.

Jesus has compassion on them. But it's also a test for His disciples. He wants them to learn to imitate His compassionate ways. There are a few factors that might get in the way of their compassion. First, the crowd is made up of mostly Gentiles, people traditionally looked down upon and despised by the Jews. Second, one could argue that the people are in this situation due to their own negligence. What were they thinking, wandering off into the wilderness without bringing provisions? How irresponsible of them! Third, the disciples themselves have only seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. If they share what they have, they may find themselves fainting on the way home. With these three strikes against compassion, the disciples fail the test. "How can we feed THESE people in this desolate place? They're Gentile sinners. They should have been more responsible. They have only themselves to blame. We came prepared. Why should we share with them and go hungry ourselves?"

Jesus is undeterred. He has compassion on the people. And, as God in the flesh, He provides for their needs. His compassion also extends to His disciples. He doesn't condemn them for their failure. He has them distribute the food so that they will learn to love sinners as He loves sinners. He feeds them, too, with more to spare. Thus, they learned to trust Jesus, and to be generous, even in times of scarcity. And by this example, so do we.

"Praise Him for His grace and favor To His people in distress; Praise Him still the same as ever, Slow to chide and swift to bless: Alleluia, Alleluia! Glorious in His faithfulness" (LSB 793, st.2). 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. Amen. (Collect for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity)

Monday of the Seventh Week after Trinity

AUGUST 1, 2022

Today's Reading: Genesis 2:7-17

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 17:1-19; Acts 26:1-23

The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Artwork often portrays the Tree of Life as bright and beautiful, green and full of delectable fruit, while the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is dark and ugly, scraggly, with a single poison apple attached. This is inaccurate. God called all that He made very good. Both trees were beautiful, reflecting the beauty of their Creator. Both trees were good.

If anything, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was the most beautiful and most precious of all the trees, since this tree had God's Word attached to it. Before the Fall, God's Word of command was received by Adam as a gift from God. "For man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Luther, in his great Genesis commentary, pictures this tree as the place of worship. Adam and his wife would have gathered at the tree. Adam would preach God's Word about the tree, and they would worship their good God by keeping His Word—admiring the tree but leaving the fruit alone.

God's words are good. His commands are good and beautiful and precious. Only sin makes disobedience attractive. Because of sin, the minute God tells us, "No," we want to do it more than ever. How sad it is that the serpent tempted them, and that they were deceived and transgressed the command, plunging the world into sin and death. Now God's commands seem burdensome rather than good. Now every forbidden fruit seems irresistible.

"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" ("The Law of God Is Good and Wise" LSB 579, st.6).

We flee to Jesus, the new and greater Adam, whose obedience is credited to us, and whose payment for guilt has set us free. And basking in His forgiveness and life, we learn, more and more, to love God's Word, and even His good commands. And soon, in the resurrection of all flesh, our lives will wholly conform to God's good and beautiful Word. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Our works cannot salvation gain; They merit only endless pain. Forgive us Lord! To Christ we flee, Who pleads for us endlessly. Have mercy, Lord! ("These Are the Holy Ten Commands" LSB 581, st.12)

Tuesday of the Seventh Week after Trinity

AUGUST 2, 2022

Today's Reading: Romans 6:19-23

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 17:20-47; Acts 26:24-27:8

*The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in
Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:22-23)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Adam earned his wages when he ate the forbidden fruit, and death has reigned ever since. Adam was the first, but you have earned your wages, too. Death is coming for you. Death is what you have earned for your sins.

How foolish, then, is the idea that anyone could earn salvation. And yet, that is the one thing religions apart from Christianity have in common. All non-Christian religions, and sadly, even some who claim to be Christian, teach ways you can save yourself, whether by obedience, sacrifices, right worship, or going after a kind of intellectual or spiritual enlightenment. Even those who claim no religion at all seek to make themselves righteous by strongly (and sometimes obnoxiously) supporting the latest social causes of the day. They may not even believe in God or in heaven or hell, but with religious enthusiasm they try to make themselves righteous through activism.

The Holy Spirit, speaking through the writings of Paul, demolishes all such schemes. "The wages of sin is death." If you have sinned, even once, then you have already earned your wages, and they will be paid. "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). If you wish to escape this fate, it will not be the result of anything you do, because everything you do is done by a sinner. Salvation, then, cannot be achieved, won, or earned by you. Instead, it is achieved, won, and earned by Jesus and then given to you. And it's given freely, because there is nothing in you worthy of the gift. To be sure, it's good, even demanded, that we "learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, and plead the widow's cause" (Isaiah 1:17). These things are good, but they are not Jesus. Only Jesus can save.

Receive salvation from Jesus. Rejoice in it. Thank the Lord and praise His holy Name. Study the Bible and grow in wisdom, understanding, and good works. Serve your neighbors and bless them. But never forget that "the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Thy love and grace alone avail To blot out my transgression;
The best and holiest deeds must fail To break sin's dread oppression.
Before Thee none can boasting stand, But all must fear Thy strict demand
And live alone by mercy. ("From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee" LSB 607, st.2)*

Wednesday of the Seventh Week after Trinity

AUGUST 3, 2022

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism:* Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 17:48-18:9; Acts 27:9-26

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

(Small Catechism: Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. God gave His Word to Adam and Eve—His good command not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The devil hated God and enacted his evil purpose and plan for the downfall of the man and woman whom God had created in love. He tempted them to disobey God's Word of life, bringing sin and death into the world. Since then, Satan's evil purpose and plan have continued to be the downfall of man. And ever since the Fall, the sin-corrupted world and our sin-corrupted flesh have been his allies. Luther called the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh the "unholy trinity," a united terrible force bent on our eternal destruction.

Only one man stood in their way—the God-man, Jesus Christ. Here the Creator of the world, who had taken on uncorrupted human flesh, stood stronger than the devil. Only He could oppose the "unholy trinity" and have a prayer of winning. Imagine the devil's sinister glee when his greatest enemy was crucified, dead, and buried. Little did he know that the Cross was his undoing. For there at the Cross, God offered Himself in the place of sinners. Jesus "overcame the assaults of the devil and gave His life as a ransom for many." He "was sacrificed for us and bore the sins of the world. By His dying He has destroyed death, and by His rising again He has restored to us everlasting life."

This is God's will—to save you, to defeat the "unholy trinity" in His Cross and resurrection, to baptisally unite you to Jesus in His dying and rising, to give you faith so that you hallow God's holy Name, live as a citizen of His kingdom, and be strengthened and kept firm in His Word and faith until you die and are raised to live with Him forever. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Christ the Lord of hosts, unshaken By the devil's seething rage, Thwarts the plan of Satan's minions; Wins the strife from age to age; Conquers sin and death forever; Slams them in their steely cage.

Jesus came, this word fulfilling, Trampled Satan, death defied; Bore the brunt of our temptation, On the wretched tree He died. Yet to life was raised victorious; By His life our life supplied.

("Christ, the Lord of Hosts, Unshaken" LSB 521, st.1,4)

Thursday of the Seventh Week after Trinity

AUGUST 4, 2022

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 18:10-30; Acts 27:27-44

Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul.
(1 Samuel 18:12)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Speaking of tyrannical kings (recall the Reflection from the Seventh Sunday after Trinity) and evil plans and purposes of the devil (yesterday's *Reflection*), we have in 1 Samuel 18:10–30 the incarnation of both. Saul had become a wicked king, and God had withdrawn His blessing from him. David, however, had already been chosen by God as Saul's successor, and it was clear that God's blessing rested upon him. Not only did God give David success in battle, He also led David to love and be respectful of his enemy. This seemed to enrage Saul even more. By trickery, deceit, and outright violence, Saul tried time and again to end David's life. But God hindered the evil plans and purposes of Saul (which were of the devil) and protected and defended His chosen servant, David.

David foreshadows another chosen servant of the Lord: Jesus the Christ. He, too, was hated by jealous foes who tried and even succeeded in killing Him, "although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth" (Isaiah 53:9b). As was the case with Saul, so it was with Jesus' enemies. The devil and his evil plans and purposes lay behind their jealous rage. But even though they succeeded in putting Him to death, God did not abandon His soul nor let His body see corruption (Psalm 16:10). Even death could not defeat Him.

And death cannot defeat you, either. The devil and all this world's tyrants rage against Christ, against the Church, and against you. Even though, in Christ, you love your enemies and seek their good, so often your faithfulness and love enrage them even more. Their evil plan and purpose is for your destruction. But you are God's chosen in Holy Baptism. You are His own beloved people. They can rage, plot, and try their best to bring about your destruction. But all their plans shall fail. For you are the ones redeemed by the blood of your Savior, Jesus. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us, We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpower us. This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.

("A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" LSB 656, st.3)

Friday of the Seventh Week after Trinity

AUGUST 5, 2022

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 19:1-24; Acts 28:1-15

And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father. (1 Samuel 19:4)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. David's troubles with Saul continue in today's reading. Saul is still plotting and scheming to take David's life. But here we learn that David had an intercessor and friend in Saul's son Jonathan, who spoke on behalf of his friend David. How bold Jonathan was in his dealings with his father for the sake of his friend. In faith and love he obeyed the Eighth Commandment, defending David and speaking well of him, all at great risk to himself.

In this, Jonathan is a picture of Christ, our truest friend and intercessor. The circumstances are not exactly the same. After all, we are guilty, whereas David, as Jonathan said, "has not sinned against you (Saul), and his deeds have brought good to you" (1 Samuel 19:4). Furthermore, Saul was a wicked man, motivated by sinful jealousy, but God is righteous, holy, and pure.

This means Jesus, as our friend and intercessor, has a much harder job defending us than Jonathan did defending David. We are not innocent. We have earned God's righteous wrath. We have sinned against our king and deserve to die. How will our intercessor and friend, Jesus, appease God our king?

In a far greater way than Jonathan, Jesus took all the risk upon Himself. To save us from God's righteous wrath, He took our place, bearing the punishment that was meant for us. Risen from the grave, and seated at God's right hand in glory, Jesus is our advocate before the Father. He says to His Father, "Behold My friends. See how I have paid for their sins, forgiven them Myself, washed them clean in Baptism, and filled them with My own life. Not a spot, not a blemish, not a stain of sin remains in them."

Jesus welcomes us into His kingdom and presents us before His Father cleansed and redeemed, righteous, holy, and pure. And the Father cannot but agree with His Son. He relents from His righteous wrath and welcomes you into His presence with open arms.

What a wonderful friend and intercessor you have in Jesus! In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus, hail! Enthroned in glory, There forever to abide; All the heavenly hosts adore Thee, Seated at Thy Father's side. There for sinners Thou art pleading; There Thou dost our place prepare, Ever for us interceding Till in glory we appear. ("Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus" LSB 531, st.3)

Saturday of the Seventh Week after Trinity

AUGUST 6, 2022

Today's Reading: Introit for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity

(Psalm 48:1, 3, 11, 14; antiphon: v.9-10)

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 20:1-23; Acts 28:16-31

We have thought on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. (Psalm 48:9)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Tomorrow is the Lord's Day. Once again, we will go to the house of the Lord for worship. And it's good for us to occasionally ask ourselves: Why do we do this? Why do we go to church? Do we go to stroke God's ego and tell Him how great He is? Do we go to church because God said we have to, and will be mad at us if we don't?

"We have thought on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple." That's what the Old Testament saints thought about church. To be sure, God commanded them to go, and the psalms they sang were full of praise for God. But God is not insecure. Nor does He issue commands simply to burden His children with yet one more thing to do to appease Him. Instead, God's faithful people knew that He only commanded that which was good for them. And when it came to praising God, well, they just couldn't help it. Why? Because there, in the temple, they received the greatest gifts of all. There they meditated upon God's steadfast love, remembered His mercies, and received that love again in the forgiveness of their sins. There in the temple they met with God and received His gift of forgiveness through the Old Testament sacrificial (sacramental) system. When their weak flesh tried to convince them that they had better things to do, God's command rebuked their flesh, and God's promises motivated them to come in faith. And as they received the Gifts, they could not help but praise His holy Name.

Tomorrow is the Lord's Day. Your flesh may offer up reasons not to go to church, but God's command is there to curb the flesh, and His promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation remind you of the great blessings you will receive there. It's really quite amazing and wonderful! God Himself shows up in every congregation where the Word of God is preached purely and His Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution. There, love and forgiveness are poured out upon God's faithful people as they gather in His presence. And in receiving these Gifts, God's people cannot help but thank and praise their gracious God. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen

Open now thy gates of beauty; Zion let me enter there, Where my soul in joyful duty Waits for Him who answers prayer. Oh, how blessed is this place, Filled with solace, light, and grace!

("Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty" LSB 901, st.1)

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

AUGUST 7, 2022

Today's Reading: Matthew 7:15-23

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 20:24-42; 1 Corinthians 1:1-25

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits."
(Matthew 7:15-16a)*

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Why can't we all just get along? Why is the Church so fractured, divided, and engaged in endless doctrinal arguments? Wouldn't it be better to set aside our differences and try to work together for the sake of the Church? You know, people who believe the Bible is God's Word and those who don't; those who celebrate homosexuality and those who call it sin; those who teach that Baptism saves and those who say it's only a symbol. Are these issues (and so many others) really worth dividing the Church? Can't we all just get along? It certainly would make for more peaceful lives and a more peaceful church. But there's just one little problem: Jesus won't have it!

He's dead serious about the dangers of false teaching. He calls the false prophets "wolves"—a demonic name. They are rotten trees with bad fruit which shall be cut down and thrown into the "fire"—a designation for hell. It sounds harsh, but Jesus is trying to impress upon us the seriousness of false doctrine. Our God is a God of truth. The truth He reveals in His Word is for our good and for our salvation. Any teaching that contradicts the truth is an attack on our salvation.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). All the false religions of men teach that the will of the Father is salvation by works. But in truth, this is the will of the Father: that the Son drink the cup of His wrath, and spill His blood on the Cross. The will of the Father is that you take and drink the lifeblood of His Son in Holy Communion, for the remission of your sins. The saving truth is that Christ has paid your debt. Your sins are forgiven. You are blessed and loved by Him. And if Jesus needs to get a little harsh with the false teachers to protect that truth, so be it. 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. (Collect for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity)

Monday of the Eighth Week after Trinity

AUGUST 8, 2022

Today's Reading: Jeremiah 23:16-29

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 24:1-22; 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:16

“Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes...they say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’”
(Jeremiah 23:16–17)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Again, we see how seriously God warns us about the dangers of false prophets. Jesus said, “You will recognize them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16). One fruit of false teachers is that they are quick to tell you what you want to hear. The hard thing about speaking the truth is that sometimes folks don’t want to hear it. Paul warned young Timothy, “The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from the truth...” (2 Timothy 4:3–4). Any pastor who tries to preach and teach God’s truth as revealed in Holy Scripture quickly encounters those with itching ears who will reject him for his message. And immediately following that, he is faced with the intense temptation of the flesh to tell people what they want to hear in order to avoid suffering and be liked by all.

That is why Paul exhorted Timothy to “be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2). God’s truth demanded that Timothy do unpleasant things like reproving, rebuking, and exhorting. Our challenge is that God’s Word says things we don’t want to hear. No one enjoys being reproved or rebuked. But as unpleasant as it is, you need your sins exposed, or else you will go on in your sins, despising God’s Word, and stubbornly following your own heart, all the while thinking “all is well with me” and “no disaster shall befall me.”

What you need is a faithful preacher, willing to speak the truth, not false teachers telling you what you want to hear. Salvation is not a vain hope in yourself; it is sure hope in Christ crucified and risen for you. Faithful preachers are willing to say the hard words to you, so that you will be ready to receive the good words in faith. And the good Gospel words are these: “It shall be well with you IN CHRIST,” and, “No disaster shall befall you IN CHRIST.” In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

*Preach you the Word and plant it home
To men who like or like it not,
The Word that shall endure and stand
When flow’rs and men shall be forgot.
 (“Preach You the Word” LSB 586, st.1)*

Tuesday of the Eighth Week after Trinity

AUGUST 9, 2022

Today's Reading: Acts 20:27-38

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 25:1-22; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23

And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him. (Acts 20:37)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Why was there so much weeping from the Ephesian elders? Why did they hug and kiss Paul, sad to see him go? They were emotional because of their great love for Paul. And they loved Paul, most of all, because he had proclaimed the truth to them.

The last couple of *Reflections* have warned us against false teachers and their wicked fruit of false doctrine. We are to “watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that [we] have been taught” and “avoid them” (Romans 16:17). But how should we respond to those who proclaim God’s truth to us?

The Ephesian elders provide us with a good example. Among them were Jews who had spent their whole lives desperately trying to earn God’s favor by keeping the letter of the Law. Also among them were Greeks, raised in idolatry and wickedness. All had been lost in sin, futilely trying to save themselves. But now they knew the true God of love who sent His Son to rescue them from their sin. And who was it that brought them this good news? Paul! They loved him so, because he had delivered to them the greatest gift of all—God’s true words of freedom and life.

Paul didn’t tell them what they wanted to hear. Paul says, “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20–21). The Holy Spirit accompanied his preaching, bringing each of these men to repentance and faith. In many ways, then, they owed their eternal lives to the man who had proclaimed this saving Gospel to them.

So have you been blessed with people who have proclaimed and taught you God’s true Word. Whoever they are, be they parents or grandparents, other relatives or friends, and especially your pastors, God has worked through them to give you the greatest gift of all—repentance and faith in Jesus Christ leading to eternal life. Recognizing the great gifts that they have brought to you, how can you not treasure them, love them, and thank God for them? In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

O Christ, our true and only light, Enlighten those who sit in night; Let those afar now hear Your voice And in your fold with us rejoice.

(“O Christ, Our True and Only Light” LSB 839, st.1)

Wednesday of the Eighth Week after Trinity

AUGUST 10, 2022

Today's Reading: *Small Catechism*: Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 25:23-44; 1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Give us this day our daily bread.

(Small Catechism: Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer)

In the Name † of Jesus. Amen. Luther's explanation says, "God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people." If that's true, then why do we need to pray for it? If our praying doesn't earn our daily bread, then why pray at all?

Luther's list of the things included in "daily bread" are the very things we spend our lives trying to get. Our lives are filled with anxious work and worry because we think our daily bread depends on our own efforts. Look at Luther's list and consider how much of your life is filled with the pursuit of these things: "Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."

We need to pray for daily bread so that we might be set free from our worry and anxious labor. We need to "realize this," that God is the source of our daily bread, and to confess this with our mouth by asking Him for what He has promised to give. In so doing, we will receive our daily bread—not as something we have earned, but as a gift from God—"with thanksgiving."

For we do have such a gracious God who can be trusted to provide. After all, has He not already given us the far greater gift of salvation in His Son, Jesus Christ? "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32) In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre! He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry. His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. (Psalm 147:7-11)

Thursday of the Eighth Week after Trinity

AUGUST 11, 2022

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 26:1-25; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you... a man has his father's wife... deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.
(1 Corinthians 5:1-5)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. Paul had some difficult things to say to the church in Corinth. They were tolerating sexual immorality in their midst. A man had even taken his father's wife to be his own. Apparently, none of their pastors or leaders were willing to exercise church discipline and in failing to do so, they had failed to truly love this man.

Now, that might sound strange to you. Most people think of love as a feeling. We feel loved when those around us do and say things that make us feel good, and we often conclude that it would be unloving to ever say anything that might make a loved one feel bad. Even though the Bible speaks of reproof, rebuke, and correction, according to God's Word, as loving acts (2 Timothy 3:16; 4:2), we find ourselves hesitant to do such truly loving works, for fear of being "unloving."

"My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves as a father the son in whom he delights" (Proverbs 3:11-12). Just as a father disciplines his children out of love, Paul was loving this man and the Corinthian congregation when he boldly rebuked them. And even though he instructs them to take the extreme measure of delivering the man to Satan (excommunication), his ultimate desire is that this act of church discipline would finally bring him to repentance "so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."

Being called to repentance is not a pleasant experience, but it is necessary. Holding on to our sins in unrepentance is to despise Christ and His sacrifice for sinners. Those who gently, or when necessary, firmly, call us to repentance, are people who truly love us. They care more about our salvation than they do about our approval. Let us thank God for them, heed their loving rebuke, repent, and return to Christ our Savior who has delivered us from our sins and freed us to walk in newness of life. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Breathe, O Breathe Thy loving Spirit Into every troubled breast; Let us all in Thee inherit; Let us find thy promised rest. Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be; End of faith, as its beginning, Set our hearts at liberty.
(*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*" LSB 700, st.2)

Friday of the Eighth Week after Trinity

AUGUST 12, 2022

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 28:3-25; 1 Corinthians 6:1-20

Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

In the Name † of Jesus Amen. The above list is not exhaustive. You could add “murderers” and “persecutors” to the list, and Paul himself would be included. Paul, like the Christians whom he served, had a past. He was part of the mob that stoned Stephen, the first New Testament martyr (Acts 7:58; 8:1), and he was a persecutor and violent opponent of the first Christians (1 Timothy 1:13). But Jesus had lovingly and firmly called him to repentance on the Damascus road (Acts 9), sent him to a preacher where he heard the Gospel and was washed in Baptism, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and justified in the Name of Jesus Christ. Paul was a changed man.

So were the Christians in Corinth, whom Paul had evangelized. Some of them had similarly dark pasts. But they, too, had been brought to repentance and faith through Paul’s preaching of Law and Gospel. They were changed men and women, but that didn’t mean that their struggles with sin were over. They were constantly tempted to slip back into the sins which once held such sway over their lives and sometimes, in weakness, they gave in to those temptations. Their lives would be those of daily repentance and faith, living in the forgiveness of sins. As Christians, their sins no longer defined them. No longer were they sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, etc. They had a new identity in Christ. Paul was warning them not to abandon their new identity and return to a life defined by unrepentant sins, but instead to embrace their true identity in Christ and live as those redeemed by Christ.

The same is true for you. Like Paul and the Corinthians, you may have a past, too, one that still tempts and troubles you. But that past doesn’t define you. Christ does. You have been watermarked in your Baptism, sanctified by the Holy Spirit and justified in Jesus’ Name. And that life, the life of the redeemed is far better. In the Name † of Jesus. Amen.

Now my conscience is at peace; From the Law I stand acquitted. Christ hath purchased my release And my ev’ry sin remitted. Naught remains my soul to grieve: Jesus sinners doth receive.

(“Jesus Sinners Doth Receive” LSB 609, st. 6)

Saturday of the Eighth Week after Trinity

AUGUST 13, 2022

Today's Reading: Introit for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity

(Psalm 54:1-3, 7; antiphon: v.4-5)

Daily Lectionary: 1 Samuel 31:1-13; 1 Corinthians 7:1-24

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, "Is not David hiding among us?" (Introduction to Psalm 54)

In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen. We're already familiar with the jealousy and murderous actions of King Saul's attempts to take the life of David. Psalm 54, the Introit for tomorrow, was written by King David during this same period, when he was in hiding from the murderous rage of Saul, and was betrayed by Ziphites who told the King his whereabouts.

Like David, you may have experienced betrayal. It's a terrible, hurtful experience. All kinds of emotions arise; from confusion and sadness, to hurt and anger, to fear and doubt. Psalm 54 gives voice to these emotions and helps us to commend our circumstances to God. David prays, telling God of his situation: "Strangers have risen against me; ruthless men seek my life" (Psalm 54:3). He prays for God's help: "O God, save me by your name, and vindicate me by your might" (Psalm 54:1). He expresses his trust that God will make things right: "Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life. He will return the evil to my enemies; in your faithfulness put an end to them" (Psalm 54:4-5). And finally, he remembers how God has delivered and helped him in the past: "For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies" (Psalm 54:7).

David couldn't have known how his prayer would perfectly parallel the experience of his descendant Jesus. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, with a kiss. He was abandoned by the rest of His disciples in His time of need. He was betrayed by His own people who shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" But His trust in the Father never wavered. Perhaps he even prayed this psalm that day. God vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead, and now He stands in triumph over all His enemies. If you have been betrayed, look to Christ who was betrayed for you. See in His Cross and resurrection the embodiment of God's faithfulness to you. Take upon your lips the words of Psalm 54, commending yourself to God. And know that your faith in Christ will be vindicated on the Last Day. In the Name ✠ of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, graciously behold this Your family from whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and delivered into the hands of sinful men to suffer death upon the cross; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
(Collect for Good Friday)

*Martin Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers taken from
the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther.*

Unless otherwise noted, Biblical quotations are from the ESV.

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