



Authorized by the Commission on Worship of the  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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Year B  
by  
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# Year B

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The pages here presented contain an attempt to assist the pastor in planning the Sunday services for the year. The commentary for each Sunday is not intended as a bulletin blurb nor as a paragraph to read during the service itself. Rather the goal is twofold:

- 1) To help the pastor see that the readings on each Sunday usually contain one central theme for that day, with the Gospel lesson as the key or central reading;
- 2) To help the pastor see that the themes for each Sunday build on the preceding Sundays and anticipate Sundays to come; the hope is that during the course of the year every major doctrine will find its proper place in an appropriate sequence and setting.

It will be up to those reading these pages to judge whether or not the goals have been reached. But if the reader keeps them in mind, he will not be surprised when he finds that many possible themes in a given reading have been neglected. Every text contains a thousand sermons with the possibility of any number of different points of emphasis. To treat any text, much less one text in a setting of texts, exhaustively on one Sunday is simply not possible. Anyone who thinks that he has succeeded in presenting all of the themes and thoughts of a text or even most of them in one fifteen to twenty minute sermon has without doubt been shallow in his thinking and superficial in his preaching. If we can find one or two major themes in our text in the context of the liturgical year and the pericope series and in the company of the other readings for the day, we should be satisfied.

With these things in mind it is the author's prayer that what is here offered is something that may serve as a beginning for text study and the preparation for the Sunday service. If the preacher feels overwhelmed by the majesty of the text and all that it has to offer, if he is perplexed about where to begin, at sea over which of the number of points he wants to try to make from God's Word, he may find what follows of some use. If the preacher worries that he is saying the same thing every Sunday, what follows may be helpful as he tries to make each Sunday God's unique visit with us that it should be. If the preacher is anxious that he not miss presenting a particular doctrine or that he not overwork another doctrine at the expense of the rest of the *corpus doctrinae*, then too what follows may serve a purpose; for every effort has been made, as aforesaid, to present all of the body doctrine in its proper sequence during the course of the year.

Each season begins with a general theme that more or less unites the readings for that season. Then each succeeding Sunday tries to develop that theme. During the Pentecost season, one will generally find that there is a major break in the train of thought after about seven or eight weeks, and a new theme will emerge; the new theme will still be built on what preceded and anticipate what is yet to come. It should be expected that some themes and some Sundays will work out better than others; what follows is just one man's attempt to help unify the service in the context of the liturgical year and of the pericope series, as the inventors of pericope series intended. The themes presented are by no means the only ones possible; if the reader comes up with other and better ones, he should by all means use them.

In all things may Jesus Christ be praised and God's people edified! -- DMD

# Second Sunday after Pentecost

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In his kingdom we are to live according to his will as expressed in the law. But even in the directions given for our lives in the law, we see *Christ for us*. For the law does not benefit God; it benefits us. The Third Commandment is a pre-eminent example of the point.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 2:23-28	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Deuteronomy 5:12-15	1 Samuel 21:1-6
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 4:5-12	Colossians 2:13-17
<i>Psalm</i>	126	122
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you rule over all things in wisdom and kindness. Take away everything that may be harmful and give us whatever is good; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Alleluia. (Psalm 119:105)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 2:23-28

The Pharisees had turned even rest into a work! Jesus declares the true intent of the Sabbath law (the word *Sabbath* means *rest*). It was God's gift, not for God's benefit, but for our benefit. Its true and lasting rest is found in Christ and in his work; thus the worship of the New Testament is chiefly a worship not of doing but of *receiving* what God has done for us in his Word and sacraments. Even the Old Testament ceremonial law had the gift of the Sabbath as its corner stone and connecting thread; thus even details of the ceremonial law could be violated in the interests of the blessings God wanted to give to man through the law. The priest gave and David received what otherwise would have been unlawful so that David and his men could carry out the expressed will of God that David should live and eventually become king. God gives the law for our benefit; our obedience to it benefits us and our neighbor, not God. The chief benefit of the rest day for us is the opportunity it affords the Holy Spirit to work faith in us by the preaching of his Word; the Third Commandment has a law shell and a gospel content.

## FIRST LESSON: DEUTERONOMY 5:12-15

There is no greater benefit to man in the law than this: God wants us to rest so that we may remember. Remember what? Remember all that he has done for us and for our salvation! Then when the rest is over, we will be refreshed to go again to serve him in serving one another. That was the ultimate purpose of the Old Testament Sabbath day; in the New Testament we are free from the day, but not from the gift of time to rest, remember, and be refreshed for service in the coming week.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:5-12**

This lesson is the beginning of a *lectio continua* for 2 Corinthians that will last six weeks. Give thanks and praise to God that he affords us time for hearing his Word, the gospel preached by the apostles and prophets in the Holy Scriptures! See how eager God is for us to hear it! He so rules over the world that in spite of the devil's rage and the world's hatred, the gospel message of Christ our only Savior still goes forth from Sunday to Sunday; as it goes forth it still performs the miracle of creating and preserving your faith. You hear the Absolution; you receive the Benediction; you receive a full meal in the sermon and the sacrament. That's all God's design, the result of his rule and providential protection of his Word, just for you! Treasure the treasure!

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 1 SAMUEL 21:1-6**

When preaching on this lesson, the preacher can easily get lost in the forest of problems presented by the text, especially in vs. 2 and 5, and miss the point of the text in the context of the readings for this Sunday. In vs. 2 we would have to deal with David's lie. In vs. 5 we would need to consider the matter of ceremonial cleanness and Abiathar's search for some rationale for giving the bread allowed only to the priests. Thus, given the time limits for the sermon, it might be best to keep this reading as an auxiliary reading that provides the context for the gospel lesson, but to use the lesson from Deuteronomy as the sermon text if you are preaching on the Old Testament texts in this cycle.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: COLOSSIANS 2:13-17**

The Old Testament Sabbath and ceremonial law had become a burden because of the pharisaical perversion of it. The Pharisees focused on the shell and missed its content. Ideally its provisions all point to Christ's winning the real Sabbath rest for us by his refusal to rest until our salvation had been won. Now the law has been removed as a burden by its fulfillment in the work of Christ. Thus now we are free to receive what the works of the law could never give: we receive Christ; we receive life; we receive forgiveness for all our sins against all of the law! That's the whole point and purpose of our worship, to receive what God has come to give us in his Word. Therefore, let us not despise preaching and his Word but gladly hear and learn it, and thus receive its saving benefit: Christ!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

190 We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

143 He's Risen, He's Risen

194 Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices

218 Then the Glory

223 As We Begin Another Week

242 Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices

285 The Ten Commandments Are the Law

286 The Law Commands and Makes Us Know

292 The Lord Is God; There Is No Other

377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

399 To God Be the Glory

452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

460 How Can I Thank You, Lord

461 From Eternity, O God

586 O Splendor of God's Glory Bright

755 Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious  
Treasure

760 When Peace, like a River

771 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

783 Stay With Us, Lord, the Sun Descends

# Third Sunday after Pentecost

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God is serious about his Word in both law and gospel. It is addressed to us both collectively and individually. This Sunday it is well summed up in the pertinent question: Where are you? In the liturgy of confession may we answer honestly! In the absolution and the gospel may we hear God's response! For faith begins and ends with confession and absolution; They are its constants that are never to be taken for granted.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 3:20-35	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Genesis 3:8-15	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 4:13-18	Revelation 20:1-6
<i>Psalm</i>	51a	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, the strength of all who trust in you, mercifully hear our prayers. Be gracious to us in our weakness and give us strength to keep your commandments in all we say and do; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Alleluia. (2 Corinthians 5:19 cf. RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 3:20-35

Those who do not want to hear the Word and those who reject God's total claim on them in the law and the gospel despise the Word and the one who brings it. Regardless of their feelings to the contrary, they will not be forgiven their rejection of the Spirit's pleadings. Ah, but those in whom he works a hearing, look what he gives! Each one (note the switch to the singular in the last verse!) becomes Jesus' brother or sister or mother—as though he had only one, and you are that one! Where are you in this circle of people in the gospel lesson? Are you outside of it, refusing submission to the law and therefore despising the grace in the gospel? "Unforgiven" is the dread verdict! Or are you inside of it, mourning over sin and rejoicing to be his dear brother, sister, mother? Ah, what grace!

## FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 3:8-15

So God calls to each of us each day, each moment, but most pointedly in the service: *where are you?* Are you hiding even now when he calls you to repentance? Will you come forward and confess it all? He waits. He warns with threats that he has carried and carries out still. He invites and entices with the promise of the woman's Seed. You have no need to hide; you have every reason in the world,—and in what comes after this world—to confess it all and to embrace what the woman's Seed has come to bring. The questions and answers in Eden are still the only ones in all the world that matter.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-18**

“All this is for your benefit!” That’s how seriously God takes the whole business of where you are and where he wants you to be not only in this life, but in the life to come. If God has nothing more important on his mind than your salvation, what could be more important on your mind? Whatever it might be, it is merely temporal, merely seen, and its greatest purpose is the moment. So the paradox: We fix our eyes on what is unseen; everything seen gets put into its proper place as either serving the goal of better seeing the unseen or making us long to reach the unseen goal God has set for us in heaven. So, where are you?

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: REVELATION 20:1-6**

The center of everything worth seeing is Christ. He defeated and has locked up the one whose head he crushed, but whom we see so often in the temptations that surround us and rise within us. Christ is the one who unmask that deception, and thereby brings us to confession. Christ is the one who not only redeemed us but has made us heirs of eternal life and holy priests before his Father. In him we are seen by God as offering up the sacrifice of lives cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. So where are you? May it not be with those bending before the dead images of pleasure, wealth, and power who are left behind with the locked up and defeated one! May it be with those who rise after confession and absolution to offer up sacrifices of thanksgiving with heart and mouth and life. The time is short. Do not delay.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

596 Let Me Be Yours Forever

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

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|--|---|
| 28 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord     | 302 Lord, to You I Make Confession        |
| 53 To Shepherds as They Watched by Night | 343 Christ Is the World’s Light           |
| 155 Christ the Lord Is Risen Again       | 378 All Mankind Fell in Adam’s Fall       |
| 196 Lord God, to You We All Give Praise  | 387 Drawn to the Cross                    |
| 200 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God         | 396 In Adam We Have All Been One          |
| 201 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God         | 455 Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You |
| 218 Then the Glory                       | 726 Christ, the Lord of Hosts, Unshaken   |
| 239 Glory Be to God the Father           | 739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me             |
| 266 Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above    | 753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us     |
| 270 We All Believe in One True God       | 754 The Tree of Life                      |
| 271 We All Believe in One True God       |   |

# Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

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The work of the gospel is invisible, but real. It is hidden, but with results that can be seen—even if the power behind those visible results remains a mystery. That is true of the kingdom of God, the church. It is no less true of the kingdom of God hidden within the individual member of the church. Has faith made a difference in life, or is it something apart? Faith that is the result of the living seed of the Word is alive and gives evidence of its life.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 4:26-34	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Ezekiel 17:22-24	Jonah 3:1-10
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 5:1-10	Colossians 1:3-8
<i>Psalm</i>	92	115
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, protector of all the faithful, you alone make strong; you alone make holy. Show us your mercy and forgive our sins day by day. Guide us through our earthly lives that we do not lose the things you have prepared for us in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy. Alleluia. (Psalm 132:9)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 4:26-34

The field of the city, the small acre of the individual soul, both are brown and dead until the seed is scattered on it. What a waste of time it seems to be!, And yet, hidden within the seed is life. It sprouts. It grows. It even becomes a planting of the Lord that is a haven for those who do not have the seed, at least not yet. So again the question begs to be asked: Where are you in this barren field, and where are you as a parched acre on that field? Has the seed taken root? Has it triumphed over obstacles and sprouted? Is it still very young and tender? Is it finally useful in service? Every time you see a plant growing, be reminded of questions like these.

## FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 17:22-24

Do you think it an impossible thing that God could make much of what appears to be nothing? He set the paradigm in his own Son. There is that baby in Bethlehem. There is that dying criminal on the cross. Nothing in the eyes of the world and less than nothing, he reigns from the tree. Yet all who have real life and life eternal find their refuge, their nourishment, their beauty, their life, their all, in none other.



**SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10**

How splendid, how beautiful the outward and the visible dwelling place that God has given us for a moment, before it decays and crumbles into dust. If the visible seems to us so precious, how precious must be that which for the present is still invisible to which we are heirs. If then we exert ourselves so to preserve and care for the tent, how much more concerned ought we to be that we reach the blessed permanent abode towards which we journey, a home already built and preserved for us by Christ and assured to us by his Spirit in the means of grace. Nothing of the visible tent is sure or durable; only the invisible abides forever.

*Note carefully the Greek verb in vs. 10; a better translation would be ... (“for the things he practiced while in the body.)”*

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JONAH 3:1-10**

Jonah found nothing but pain, despair, and death when he focused his attention on what could be seen and on how he felt about it. He had separated faith from consequent obedience in life. When he finally did what God told him to do, even though it seemed so foolish and so dangerous and so likely to result in his death, then God gave life and rescue through the Word. Jonah was foolish when he ran away, and outwardly foolish when he finally did what God said. The only difference is that God’s foolishness always proves wiser than the wisdom of men. So, hidden within our preaching of the law that offends and “turns off” so many is the power of God to humble, to destroy, to kill; and in the proclamation of the promises of the gospel that seem so foolish is life and salvation. May God look down and see the fruit of his powerful Word so invisible to us, and have compassion according to it!

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: COLOSSIANS 1:3-8**

It is not as though the visible and the transitory have no importance at all. It is rather in what respect they are important: Our use of the little time we have and the passing things lent to us is important as the evidence of the hidden reality of who we are and where we are going. So then, who speaks about your congregation or about you in the ways Paul describes in this reading? Is the invisible faith separated from the visible life? The power of the Word is hidden, mysterious, secret. But its fruits should not be. It is only because of that hope hidden and given in the gospel that we see all things visible, not as ends in themselves, but as means, as tools for expressing outwardly the faith that is hidden within. Don’t use the excuse that hypocrites too can do the outward works; that’s not a reason for us to do nothing, or to so hide our faith so that no one will ever see it in action.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

188 Creator Spirit, by Whose Aid

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

213 Forever with the Lord  
219 Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See  
255 Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty  
318 Sent Forth by God’s Blessing  
322 On What Has Now Been Sown

323 Almighty Father, Bless the Word  
324 Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast  
417 I’m But a Stranger Here  
430 Evening and Morning  
544 Preach You the Word

568 Good News of God Above  
608 I Fall Asleep in Jesus' Wounds  
613 Come, You Thankful People, Come

755 Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious  
Treasure  
756 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight  
760 When Peace, like a River

# Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

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We have seen that faith should give evidence of itself in life. But sometimes evidence outside of ourselves and our control challenges faith. The fact that Christ lives and lives in us, the fact that he rules all things for our good, is no guarantee that we will never face fear and disaster. Quite the contrary, he has promised us that we will have an abundance of troubles in this life. This Sunday's reading shows us one particular aspect or fruit of faith: We trust in him when all the outward evidence argues against trust in him.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 4:35-41	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Job 38:1-11	Proverbs 30:4, 5
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 5:14-21	Acts 27:13-26
<i>Psalm</i>	46	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord, our God, govern the nations on earth and direct the affairs of this world so that your Church may worship you in peace and joy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Alleluia. (Galatians 4:6 cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 4:35-41

What a magnificent mirror of the mix of fleshly unbelief and childlike trust that describes us so often in our lives! On the one hand the disciples have heard his words of love and grace and have believed them; they even trust that he is perfectly able to help. But in their distress, having tried to do everything on their own first, they can't imagine that he would keep his Word *to them*. He promised that they would be fishers of men—an impossible promise for him to keep if they perish! How kind of Jesus to put up with us! How gracious of him to wait with his help until we have learned that the only ultimate help is from him, a lesson we would never learn without suffering, without the brink of disaster or despair from time to time. Hold fast to the promise that Jesus will not leave us or forsake, not even in death!

## FIRST LESSON: JOB 38:1-11

In the storms of life we are tempted to take God to court, to call him to account. That's what the disciples were doing in the gospel lesson and that's what Job wanted to do, too. On the contrary, in the storms of life it is God who is calling us to account: Will we trust his Word and promise or our own reason, will, emotions, and the outward evidence that all is lost? Or will faith remain a dead abstraction, cut off from the promises of God in the life we live in the veil of tears, *in diesem rechten Jammerthal*. Have you heard people say: "Since God permitted thus and such to happen, I don't believe in him anymore." How foolish and perverse!

As though God owed us an explanation for anything that he sees fit to do or permit! Such explanation as there is, is found in his Word which bids us trust him in weal and woe. His Word he will always keep. In due course he will make his purposes clear, often in this life, but perfectly in heaven.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21**

Do you want a perfect example of evidence that contradicts the evident? Here it is: All the evidence of conscience says that I should be damned; all the evidence of nature, given that everything ends in death, suggests that life is under the curse of futility; all the evidence of my own personal life argues that fate and luck are whimsical and I am but a hapless victim of both. But the reality is this: God in his own inscrutable grace and wisdom has rescued my life here from vanity and my life hereafter from a curse; he has given his only begotten Son the opposite of what he deserved, so that he would give me the opposite of what I deserve. Can you think of a better reason to trust his wisdom, love, and grace, even in the darkest hours? Confession embraces also my doubts and fears of the evidence within; absolution covers all of that and bids me trust him and his Word in spite of the evidence.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: PROVERBS 30:4, 5**

This is our God and we know his name. This is our God and we know his Son. His wisdom and his might know no limits. His love has no boundary and his mercy has no bottom. His promises are as clear as they are flawless. Therefore, in spite of the evidence that seems to the contrary in days of disaster, we will seek and find refuge in him and in his promises that cannot fail! That is the nature of faith rooted in his Word, not in our senses, our reason, our emotions.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ACTS 27:13-26**

Sometimes disasters have this as their one single purpose: To teach us to despair of ourselves, our wisdom, our efforts, and to trust solely in God's providence and promises. God does not tell Paul the why of the shipwreck. Nor does Paul attempt to explain it apart from God's Word. Paul had the promise that he would appear before Caesar, and therefore he knew that he would not drown. He had the promise that the sailors would not perish, and therefore he could assure them of the same. But why they all had to go through this terrible experience God had not told him. Paul's business was to trust the promise and providence of God, and then to share that promise whatever his outward circumstance might be. A hard lesson to learn, and one that must often be learned anew; but, as the gospel lesson shows us, when we do not trust his promise, we have only fear and torment that accomplish nothing but more fear and torment.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

379 Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound

384 By Grace I'm Saved

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

145 Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won

200 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

201 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

202 If God Had Not Been on Our Side

299 All Who Believe and Are Baptized

349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness  
357 Jesus, Lover of My Soul  
366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild  
376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness  
380 Lord, 'Tis Not that I Did Choose You  
405 Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink  
415 Be Still, My Soul  
417 I'm But a Stranger Here  
419 If God Himself Be for Me  
433 Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me

439 Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me  
473 Savior, I Follow On  
517 Almighty Father, Strong to Save  
546 Lord Jesus, You Have Come  
556 Rise, Shine, You People  
609 We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer  
619 God Bless Our Native Land  
736 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized  
778 How Shall They Hear Who Have Not Heard

# Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

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Last Sunday we saw that faith does not eliminate suffering from our lives. This Sunday we see that the suffering includes even death. The unbeliever who has only tears and despair in the face of death vainly hopes in his fear that death ends all. The Christian clings to the one who has overcome death for us even when faced with death.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Lamentations 3:22-33	2 Samuel 12:11-25
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13, 14	2 Timothy 1:8-14
<i>Psalm</i>	30	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.  
Alleluia. (Mark 8:34b)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 5:21-24A, 35-43

How tragic beyond words! A little girl, the apple of her father's eye, is dying. There is nothing left to do but to turn to Jesus. When everyone tells him that there is no further point in bothering Jesus because the child has died, Jesus encourages Jairus' faith with the words, *Only believe!* But believe what? Jesus had not promised to raise the child. Yet his going was the unspoken promise of help. In the face of death Jairus trusted the promise even when he could not know exactly what form the fulfillment of the promise would take. That's our trust, too, when disaster, even death, approaches. We take refuge in the promise of Jesus to go with us, even if it means a journey to the cemetery. Do you wonder if he is too busy to be bothered? Look at how the gospel lesson ends! Jesus is the one who attends even to the smallest detail in the story; he orders something for the little girl to eat. Is he any less concerned with you, especially when you need the comfort of him who triumphed over death for us and also for our believing loved ones? How very different our experience of suffering at the threat of death from the suffering of those who have no such victorious and infinitely loving comforter!

## FIRST LESSON: LAMENTATIONS 3:22-33

Much of human suffering is the direct result of sin, often the sins of others. So Jeremiah endures the loss of everything because of the rebellion and stubborn unbelief of his countrymen. They have nothing now but death and the living nothing but shame, misery, despair. But Jeremiah recognized that regardless of the sin

that caused the misery or whose sin it was, suffering even to the point of death has a salutary benefit of clearing out the rubbish in the brain and focusing the Christian's attention on what really matters. And what matters is grace and the sustaining promise of God's abiding presence and his unfailing love expressed in the gospel.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-9, 13, 14**

But maybe this is not the moment when you must suffer like Jairus or Jeremiah. Maybe that day has not come for you; maybe for the moment it is past. Then what does the Office for this Sunday have to say to you? You are blessed now with peace and plenty so that you can show the riches of God's grace to those who are tormented and in need. That's what Jesus did. Having everything he gave it all up so that you would have everything. And now he blesses you with confidence in the gospel promises on this good day so that you can share those promises with those in a bad day. The same holds for your time and wealth; it is yours to share in humble imitation of what Jesus has shared —no, what Jesus has generously and freely given to you. That's how we pass the test of sincerity; that's how invisible faith created by the Word turns into visible works of love for our neighbor when he is having trouble seeing the grace and love of God because of the evidence of his pained circumstances.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 2 SAMUEL 12:11-25**

Sometimes the suffering that we experience is the direct result of our own sins. How pointed that lesson is in this reading. David despised the goodness and the generosity of the Lord and thus lost it for a season. The losses were painful indeed, losses that were played out throughout the rest of David's life. But confronted with the killing law and with the prospect of life long suffering in consequence of his sin, the Lord taught him that the one thing needful would not be taken away. And that one thing needful, full and utterly gracious forgiveness, would be the one constant, the one source of strength to endure, the one compensation greater than all and every loss.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 TIMOTHY 1:8-14**

This is one of Paul's so called "funeral epistles," penned by the apostle when he knew that he would shortly seal his apostolate with martyrdom. But death, even a martyr's death, is not a disappointment to Paul, not an evidence that Christ has abandoned him. Quite the contrary, it is in death that the gospel shines for him most beautifully. For death is the ultimate triumph of those whose God and Savior conquered death for them. And so the apostle at death's approach can only cheerfully and thankfully urge his dear son, Timothy, to share the victory offered and given in the gospel. Do it faithfully. Do it without alteration. Do it even if death —never mind things less than that —is the consequence of faithfulness.

*Read the Greek of this text carefully. Note the verb in vs.14: Guard as though you were guarding a prisoner and knew that if he escaped your own life would be forfeit. Notice what is to be thus guarded and the names of the empowering agent. No room for fudging the message! Who would dare to do such a thing out of fear of men, or even to be a man-pleaser?!*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

448 In You, O Lord, I Put My Trust

534 In the Midst of Earthly Life

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

64 Let Us All with Gladsome Voice

211 I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name

213 Forever with the Lord

226 To Your Temple I Draw Near

253 I Will Sing My Maker's Praises

278 Holy God, We Praise Your Name

404 Faith Is a Living Power from Heaven

405 Oh, for a Faith That Will Not Shrink

414 I Leave All Things to God's Direction

425 Oh, Sing, My Soul, Your Maker's Praises

428 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me

431 I Walk in Danger All the Way

452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

489 Lord, You Love the Cheerful Giver

520 Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old

580 Every Morning Mercies New

588 Abide with Me

605 Asleep in Jesus! Blessed Sleep

606 For Me to Live Is Jesus

607 How Blest Are They

608 I Fall Asleep in Jesus' Wounds

703 My Soul in Stillness Waits

765 Day by Day



# Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

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Jesus preserves our faith even in the face of persecution. We have seen that the Christian suffers in the face of natural calamities and that he too must face death, both his own and that of those he loves. In circumstances such as these Jesus abides faithful to his Word. Now comes the suffering that is the result of our faithfulness to that Word, of translating faith into faithfulness. It is a suffering that is promised and that is most painful when it comes from those who have heard that Word with us. Even in the face of such offense he preserves faith in the Word by the Word.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 6:1-6	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Ezekiel 2:1-5	Ezekiel 2:1—3:4
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 12:7-10	2 Timothy 3:10—4:5
<i>Psalm</i>	143	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of all power and might, you are the giver of all that is good. Help us love you with all our heart, strengthen us in true faith, provide us with all we need, and keep us safe in your care; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Happy are they who hear the Word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience. Alleluia. (Luke 8:15 cf. RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 6:1-6

It is quite bad enough when Jesus is rejected by those who do not know him. But how painful to him, so much so that in his state of humiliation he is amazed by it, when those who should have been first to recognize him instead reject him. The world, even our own so richly blessed country, exchanges the Child in Bethlehem for Santa Claus and the Risen Christ for the Easter bunny. No surprise there. But what of those in our own churches and families who think they know him so well that they no longer know him at all? He could do nothing there in Nazareth because in their unbelief; no one asked him to do anything. And in our midst? Were he still in his state of humiliation, would he be surprised at us who have had his Word for so long and still think so little of it? On the other hand, those who follow him in faithfulness have a stumbling block in their path: the unfaithfulness of those who should know better and then their ultimate hostility to the pure teaching and living of his Word. Only that Word and reliance on it gets us past that stumbling block; Jesus promised such rejection, and his Word even in that regard has proven true.

## FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 2:1-5

Ezekiel's experience is not the exception but the paradigm. The rejection that Jesus experienced from his own ultimately turned into hatred and bitter hostility. That was the experience of all the apostles and

prophets. In fact when there is never any hostility from a rebellious and gainsaying people, either Jesus has changed his mind about persecution or we have joined the rebels! People should know that a prophet has been among them from the faithfulness of the prophet to the Word and to the Savior, whether they like the message or not. For whether they like it or not, it remains the only message that saves. It saves even in the face of persecution from those who should know better.

#### **SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10**

In the face of opposition the preacher may be tempted to wonder what's wrong with him. Such an examination may indeed reveal that there is a lot wrong with him, that he, too, has thorns in the flesh or such things as get in the way of the message. Those thorns that God wants to remove God will remove in answer to our earnest prayer and the faithful application of his Word. But some thorns will always remain so that the messenger, whether the messenger is the pastor or the congregation itself, will always have reason to ponder the truth that the success of the gospel is always due to the gospel alone. We are not thinking here of moral flaws that make the messenger a contradiction of the message or of such ineptitude that the messenger is ill suited to be a messenger. Among the thorns, at least in the context of the readings for this Sunday, could be persecution of the truth from members who say they are loyal to the truth; it could be resistance to one or more specific applications of the law that obscures the faithfulness we say we have to all of God's Word; it could be lack of time to do everything that we know needs to be done, even a lack of time that keeps us even from knowing what needs to be done; it could be persecution from a community that knows how we apply God's Word in the doctrines concerning fellowship or marriage or lodges and scouts, or creation, or "family values," or any one of a number of other things. Each pastor and congregation will have its own list of messengers of Satan who hinder the course of the gospel's proclamation.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 2:1—3:4**

The additional verses here are very useful. In the face of hostility and persecution there is one thing that sustains and strengthens us and gives us peace and joy: The same message of the gospel that provokes so much opposition is the source of all our own life and joy. Eat the scroll; savor its sweetness; devour it so that it becomes altogether a part of you!

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 TIMOTHY 3:10—4:5**

Opposition and persecution are guaranteed wherever the Word is proclaimed in its truth and purity —a point that Luther and the Confessions never tired of making. Yet God promises his abiding and saving presence, even if the outward evidence seems to contradict that beautiful promise. Yes, even if the rescue is delayed to the point of death! Again notice that Paul mentions not just opposition from outside of the Church but especially notes the opposition that came from those who once heard and knew the truth. It is the latter that is the most damaging and to us personally the most painful. But in it all may we prove faithful to the Word, to all of it, that we may also know the faithfulness of God to that Word; he promises persecution, and he promises that his Word will nevertheless remain effective. He has promised that we ultimately we will be rescued to see his faithfulness in his own good time. What more could we want as pastors and as people of God?

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head  
544 Preach You the Word

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

176 Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord  
205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven  
281 God Has Spoken by His Prophets  
284 How Precious Is the Book Divine  
291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word  
403 I Know My Faith Is Founded  
420 God Moves in a Mysterious Way

465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken  
507 Lord of Our Growing Years  
541 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide  
762 Consider How the Birds Above  
765 Day by Day  
768 How Firm a Foundation  
781 I Lie, O Lord, within Your Care

# Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

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With this Sunday the emphasis in the readings begins to shift. During the past eight weeks the emphasis has been on the creation of faith and its preservation in spite of the evidence of suffering and persecution that seem to contradict his promise. With this Sunday the second cycle of the Pentecost season begins and with it an emphasis on the response of those who hear the Word. The response emphasized this Sunday is: Those who have the Savior in his Word share him by sharing the Word.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 6:7-13	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Amos 7:10-15	Amos 7:10-17
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 1:3-14	1 Timothy 3:1-7
<i>Psalm</i>	78	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your Word. By your Holy Spirit help us to receive it with joy and to bring forth fruits in faith and hope and love; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. The Word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. Alleluia.  
(Deuteronomy 30:14 cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 6:7-13

In the forefront of those sharing the Savior by sharing his Word are those that he has specifically called into that office. What should we expect of them? We should expect that they are ready for some to receive and some to reject that word. Notice that he sends them to share only what they have received; he does not give them permission to fudge the message when many or most reject it. For Jesus does not come through false doctrine to create or strengthen faith. It is in faithfulness to the message and reliance on his promise that repentance is worked which both confesses sin and rejoices in absolution. He will keep his promise when and how it pleases him without the “help” of our opinions, our compromises of the truth, our eagerness to be popular and always successful.

## FIRST LESSON: AMOS 7:10-15

False or hypocritical prophets always assume that true prophets have the same motive that they do: To earn a living by their work. But the true prophet depends on God to keep his Word, i.e., to send opposition and to send success when and where it pleases him. Notice, however, the love and patience and mercy of God; even when he knows that his Word will be rejected, he sends his beloved messengers to proclaim it. The unbelieving Jeroboam and Amaziah are without excuse. The faithful Amos has this as his reward, that he was faithful to God and his Word, whether they would hear or not; faithfulness is its own reward.

**SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 1:3-14**

This begins an 8 week *lectio continua* through Ephesians. What is the impetus and inspiration to do what Jesus sent his disciples to do and what Amos did? The grand impulse is in the gifts of the gospel received by those thus sent. They have been predestined in God's providence. And they will not despair as they share the gospel. For its success does not depend on them; their work is but to announce and proclaim this great grace of God in Christ so that by it those predestined will hear and be gathered into the family of God. Just as our salvation does not depend on us, so the salvation of our hearers does not depend on us either. Those who are predestined have God to praise and thank for it. Those who reject the news we proclaim to all have only themselves to blame for it. We do not try to square that circle; we rejoice in the mystery and are comforted by it both personally and in our labors with the gospel.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: AMOS 7:10-17**

The verses added remind us that our message is not always one of "nice-nice." We, too, need to remind people that God is serious about his Word whether we are or not. He paid so high a price for our salvation that the judgment is fierce for those who trample the gift of the Savior underfoot and despise his generous offer of grace and eternal life.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7**

While we can take no credit for the success of the gospel, we can certainly throw obstacles in its path. There is a danger that we degenerate into a certain professionalism that ends up making the assumptions of Amaziah in the first lesson not all that wide of the mark. There is a danger that in a godless age we see ourselves even at our worst as better than the common herd. But God wants us to take his Word seriously before we tell others to do so. Have we become so cocky, so arrogant, so self righteous and self confident that we imagine that these words are dead letters to us and apply only to someone else. May it not be! So noble is our task, so holy our vocation! May we not cheapen it by contempt for its solemn and saving essence!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

525 The Son of God, Our Christ

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

241 Alleluia! Let Praises Ring	543 God of the Prophets
293 God's Word Is Our Great Heritage	544 Preach You the Word
297 Baptized in Water	545 Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit
308 As Surely As I Live, God Said	546 Lord Jesus, You Have Come
392 Not unto Us	548 O Lord, in Prayer You Spent the Night
511 O Lord, Our God, Your Gracious Hand	567 Awake, O Spirit, Who Inspired
512 Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds	568 Good News of God Above
516 You Parents, Hear What Jesus Taught	572 Send Forth, O Lord, to Every Place
518 Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go	575 How Shall They Hear the Word of God
530 Hark! The Church Proclaims Her Honor	598 My Maker, Be with Me

723 Holy Spirit, the Dove Sent from Heaven  
753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us  
770 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve

777 Now Let Us All in Hymns of Praise  
778 How Shall They Hear Who Have Not Heard

# Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

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The readings this Sunday deepen the emphasis of last Sunday. Some have called it “Orthodoxy Sunday” because of the emphasis on the pure Word; that’s the Word Christ has given and by which he called us to be his own; that’s the Word by which he strengthens us when we are worn out, humanly speaking, as a result of faithfulness to it in all of its truth and purity. The appropriate response to the hearing of the pure Word is a clinging to it and share it thereby Christ’s faithfulness to us finds a response in our joyful faithfulness to him.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 6:30-34	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jeremiah 23:1-6	Numbers 27:12-23
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 2:13-22	Hebrews 13:7-8, 17-21
<i>Psalm</i>	23	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Grant us, Lord, the spirit to think and do what is right that we, who cannot do anything that is good without you, may by your help be enabled 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.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. My Word will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. Alleluia. (Isaiah 55:11b cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 6:30-34

May we ever be eager to do what the disciples did, to report to him *all* that we have done and taught. To be sure there is still sin to confess. But the one who looks forward to reporting to Jesus all that he has done and taught will not soon degenerate into a mere professional, whose goal is to win the praise of the crowd and ultimately (whether he knows and it admits or not) a following for himself. Jesus will be delighted to hear us. More than that, he will know and understand that because of the weakness of our mortal frames we have become worn and tired in the struggle against the enemy inside ourselves as well as foes of the gospel on the outside. And so he will take us aside—ah, what a delight!—and go with us to a quiet place where we may hear him and feast on his words for us, just for us. That’s what he invites us to receive from him in our private and very solitary devotional life, separate from what we do and prepare also for others. The respite will be brief, but so rich. Soon the telephone will ring. Soon there will be another appointment, another meeting, another knock on the door. But we have been with Jesus. It is time to do and teach, even as we look forward to and anticipate a return to report to him and hear him call us aside to himself. Those who understand these things have no difficulty applying this text in urging members to also go away to a quiet place with Jesus every day before they must rush off into the world and to its pressures and demands. May we and they with us love both: to feed and to be fed.

**FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 23:1-6**

*Woe!* What a punch that word has when it comes from God. And come it does over those who falsify and adulterate his pure Word. False doctrine destroys and scatters the sheep of his pasture. Oh, to be sure, he will always find a way to gather in his elect. But woe to those who hinder him in that work, and thus conceal from the doomed and dying world *The LORD Our Righteousness*, who gives his righteousness, who gives himself in his pure Word and Sacraments. May we be found faithful!

**SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 2:13-22**

This is the response that God wants to create by the proclamation of his pure Word: He wants to give us peace with him and then peace with each other as we see in Christ our all in all. That peace comes from the pure Word, not from compromise and error designed to gain peace. Whether we come from this culture or that, are of one gender or the other, have this occupation in life or another, are this age or that, Christ is all in all. Christ makes us a people of God. Christ gives us an everlasting citizenship and homeland. Christ makes us individually and collectively into his temple, so that when we see one another we see the dwelling place of Christ. But that is only true to the extent that it has the Word of the apostles and prophets as foundation and Christ himself as the cornerstone from which every joint takes its measure and has its worth. It is all the fruit of his faithfulness to his Word, which calls forth our faithfulness and finds in it rich blessings indeed.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: NUMBERS 27:12-23**

There is so much in this lesson!

- 1) Notice the harshness of the Lord; his greatest prophet until John made one mistake, was unfaithful just once, and in consequence he will not enter into the Promised Land. God is always serious about all of his Word; to whom much is given, from him much is required! *Verbum sapiens satis est!*
- 2) Moses does not grumble at the judgment of God but accepts it in the humility that had failed him on that one occasion; the blessing of a blessed end triumphs over all the disappointments and over this crowning disappointment; our faithfulness can never match God's faithfulness —and Moses' example reminds us that that truth is no excuse for carelessness and unfaithfulness on our part.
- 3) He loves and prays for the people who had given him little but grief and had provoked him in the day of his own disobedience; faithfulness expects that from us too.
- 4) Ready to depart in peace, he rejoices that God has heard his prayers and that for the future, too, God will not leave or forsake his people in spite of their so frequent failure and ingratitude; it is not Moses who is indispensable, but God and his gracious presence in the Word with those he calls in every generation.

So "Moses did as the LORD commanded him." He was faithful, and the Lord blessed his faithfulness far more than he chastised his moment of unfaithfulness. That is also our warning and our comfort as we strive to do as the Lord has commanded us in his pure Word.



**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 13:7-8, 17-21**

These words urge a particular response to the gospel in those who proclaim it and in those who hear it. Frail and imperfect as their leaders may be, the leaders do well to live honorably and with a conscience that need not accuse them of unfaithfulness to either the law or the gospel. When congregations have such leaders, the leaders will not be placing stumbling blocks in front of the respect that is their due *for the sake of the work, of the gospel*. For faithfulness to the Word on the part of the leaders equips the hearers for faithfulness, for doing what is pleasing and what glorifies our God and only Savior, our chief Pastor, Jesus Christ.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

362 Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

47 Behold, a Branch Is Growing  
 205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven  
 226 To Your Temple I Draw Near  
 283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening  
 304 Jesus Sinners Does Receive  
 336 Come unto Me, Ye Weary  
 352 Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor  
 360 The Lord's My Shepherd; I'll Not Want  
 374 My Shepherd Will Supply My Need  
 375 The King of Love My Shepherd Is  
 436 Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep  
 520 Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old  
 528 Christ Is Our Cornerstone  
 529 Built on the Rock

531 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation  
 531 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation  
 536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head  
 545 Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit  
 548 O Lord, in Prayer You Spent the Night  
 569 O Christ, Our True and Only Light  
 750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate  
 752 In Christ Alone  
 766 The Lord's My Shepherd  
 772 When Jesus Came From Nazareth  
 774 Church of God, Elect and Glorious  
 775 For Builders Bold, Whose Vision Pure  
 779 I Sing as I Arise Today

# Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

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The readings for this Sunday move us to this response, that we strive to imitate Christ by seeing ourselves as his agents in helping one another in their time of need.

*The Sundays following have a lectio continua from John 6; the preacher will especially want to look ahead for the differing themes on these Sundays, lest he end up repeating himself.*

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 6:1-15	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Exodus 24:3-11	2 Kings 4:42-44
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16	2 Corinthians 9:8-11
<i>Psalm</i>	84	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord, your ears are always open to the prayers of your humble servants, who come to you in Jesus' name. Teach us always to ask according to your will that we may never fail to obtain the blessings you have promised; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia. (John 6:68 cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 6:1-15

Jesus creates a need so that he can satisfy it. It did not just suddenly occur to him that the thousands would be in danger since they had stayed with him so long. No, he let them stay until there was a problem. And then he solved the problem. He does that wondrous thing in our lives countless times. But often in rescuing he gives his disciples an opportunity to help him by serving those who were now in such obvious need. The boy shares. The great apostles become traffic cops and then waiters and then clean up men. And when it is all over Jesus makes sure that what *he* has done will not get in the way of his march to the cross! What are your opportunities to serve? What do you do with them? There is not a day on which we cannot pray for those in need and then ourselves become the Lord's agents through whom he at least in part answers our prayers. Do you have the fish and the bread? Can you help serve it if another has it to share?

## FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 24:3-11

Everyone needs a lot of help! The children of Israel were quick to promise obedience when they saw the might of the Lord, and just as quick to forget all about both their promise and his might. No one helped his brother to obedience. Each served self alone and thus encouraged others only in disobedience, in unfaithfulness. We, like the Israelites, have been sprinkled with blood, the blood of *the* Lamb. We have been washed and cleansed. We have not seen his might the way that they did. But because of his mighty acts for

our salvation we have been cleansed in his blood by his Word and sacraments. On that basis we have pledged to obey and to keep his Word. But we need a lot of help! We need the help of our pastors who feed us as sheep of the Lord’s pasture. We need the help and encouragement of each other. We give such encouragement when we recite the Creed together. We need to give it as well from day to day when we see each other in need of any kind of help or strengthening. How do you spur on your family or friends or fellow members to obedience and faithfulness? Or does your carelessness and indifference provoke them to an evil imitation?

**SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 4:1-7, 11-16**

Are you unsure of how you may help? Here is a wonderful list, not of acts but of attitudes that cheer and encourage those around us. Look at the Table of Duties in the Catechism. Where are you there as a gift of God to your fellow believers? Whether pastor or member, each has a noble calling to adorn himself with these attitudes that reflect our noble status as members of Christ’s body.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 2 KINGS 4:42-44**

God is so generous that sometimes he has even preserved his people miraculously. But notice that even then he used the efforts and gifts of people to show their eagerness to help as well as his eagerness to bless.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:8-11**

God is generous to you so that he might be generous through you. Who will thank God today for his gifts through you? Everyone gets rich in this scheme of things; and God enjoys the rich thanksgiving of his people, who thank him for his gifts to them and the opportunities he gives for other people to benefit from his gifts through them.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

326 May the Grace of Christ Our Savior  
 327 God Be with You till We Meet Again  
 328 God Be with You till We Meet Again  
 353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness  
 457 Fight the Good Fight  
 458 May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill  
 482 Forgive Us, Lord  
 492 Son of God, Eternal Savior

494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds  
 511 O Lord, Our God, Your Gracious Hand  
 537 Onward, Christian Soldiers  
 538 The Church’s One Foundation  
 566 We All Are One in Mission  
 616 Feed Your Children, God Most Holy  
 745 May the Peace of God  
 773 In Unity and Peace

# Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

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Last Sunday we heard of God’s generosity to us and through us. This Sunday we are reminded that his generosity in material things should serve as a constant reminder of his even greater generosity in spiritual things. It is a truism that St. Augustine so beautifully taught: There is nothing visible or transitory that does not point us back to something more important that is invisible and imperishable. The readings encourage the response of an attitude adjustment in us that includes a reordering of our priorities.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 6:24-35	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Exodus 16:2-15	Exodus 16:2-20
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 4:17-24	1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 11-13
<i>Psalm</i>	145	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you reveal your mighty power chiefly in showing mercy and kindness. Grant us the full measure of your grace that we may obtain your promises and become partakers of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” Alleluia. (John 14:23)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 6:24-35

People eat the loaves and are filled! They think no further about it than to look forward to the next filling. But Jesus’ miracle was a sign, i.e., something that pointed beyond the thing itself to something higher and more important, namely to the truth that he is the Son of God and the Savior. As such he has power to satisfy the needs of the body; but he always does it to remind us that the greater satisfaction is the food for the soul that gives eternal refreshment. Say, “Thank you,” at the table. In doing so remember the greater food in the banquet of his Word and sacrament. That will make the eating of the perishable food he gave all the more enjoyable because of the greater food to which it points, and the generosity and grace of the one who gives both in such rich measure.

## FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 16:2-15

People would still like it today if God gave everything temporal like manna from heaven. And if it happened they would behave no differently than the Israelites did: they would eat their fill and be not one bit fuller for it; they would still starve for their failure to see the true Bread from heaven. Note the point of God’s generosity even in temporal bread: *Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.* That is always the point of God’s invisible hand giving visible blessings, that we may see behind them nothing but the power of God and the grace of the Savior. Each day look at his various visible gifts and give thanks for them as evidence of

his tender love for you and his compassion for every circumstance of your life with him, your God and Savior. For he sustains the body with the perishable, so that he may fill the soul with himself.

**SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 4:17-24**

Do you see the wonderful difference between life in Christ and life outside of Christ? Outside of Christ the gifts of food and raiment, of time and energy are all squandered and lost as a foretaste of ultimate death and destruction. But with Christ and in Christ there is new life sustained outwardly and inwardly by Christ. Or don't you notice the difference? It's never a waste of time or effort to ask ourselves about that. Is your attitude different? Do you see a new life in Christ? Does anyone else see it in you? To what extent is the nurture of that new life a priority? To what extent are you eager that others see that it is new in you and your first priority? Or will we be content to be no different than the Israelites in the wilderness or so many of the Jews after the miraculous feeding of the five thousand?

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 16:2-20**

The additional verses make the point mentioned above under the First Lesson more pointed still.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-5, 11-13**

Make no mistake about it. God wants you to get the point of the readings for this Sunday and to take seriously all of his Word. If we live only for what we can see and delight only in the visible blessings of God without reference to him as their source, we, too, will perish. We will have no one to blame but ourselves. God in his visible blessings and in his protecting providence has been more than generous, giving us all that we need to avoid that terrible fate and to live joyously in his presence now and forever.

*These verses are an answer to those who assert or act as though there were only one hermeneutical principle: There is a distinction between prescriptive and descriptive sections of the Bible. They use that as an excuse for not applying warning examples to us and to our people and our church; while the principle is correct, it is only correct in the context of the rest of the hermeneutical principles. Paul gets it right!*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

- 402 My Faith Looks Up to Thee
- 403 I Know My Faith Is Founded

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 185 O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace         | 390 Salvation unto Us Has Come          |
| 283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening       | 393 If Your Beloved Son, O God          |
| 288 The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace   | 401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ      |
| 325 How Blest Are They Who Hear           | 404 Faith Is a Living Power from Heaven |
| 331 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah        | 439 Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me      |
| 338 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say        | 471 Renew Me, O Eternal Light           |
| 352 Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor  | 473 Savior, I Follow On                 |
| 377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice | 580 Every Morning Mercies New           |
| 389 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me            | 616 Feed Your Children, God Most Holy   |

740 Draw Near

744 You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

765 Day by Day

781 I Lie, O Lord, within Your Care

# Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

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Why is it so important that we respond to God's generosity in giving temporal blessings with gratitude to him for his spiritual blessings? Because we are plagued within and without by temptations to worship the temporal and to despise the eternal.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 6:41-51	
<i>First Lesson</i>	1 Kings 19:3-8	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 4:30—5:2	Hebrews 5:11—6:3
<i>Psalm</i>	34	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Alleluia. (Hebrews 11:1)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 6:41-51

The Jews only wanted a bread king. They despised the lowly Jesus whose humility veiled his deity. They rejected the ultimate bread from heaven whose person, whose coming, whose dying, whose rising again is the only nourishment that matters. At table may we sigh, *Jesus, only Jesus! He is my food eternal, my life and my salvation! Even if I starved to death, I would be full with him for all eternity!* Remembering that elemental truth as we fight against the materialism that attacks us from our own sinful nature and from the world around us.

## FIRST LESSON: 1 KINGS 19:3-18

The flight of Elijah takes place just after his greatest success on the mountain of sacrifice. As usual the visible demonstration of God's power had only a temporary and limited affect on those who saw it. Even Elijah soon forgot the proof of God's presence with him in that demonstration of power. What can restore his confidence? Only the Word! Only the effective gospel promises can keep him from falling prey to the temptation to fear and despair that all his labors were for nothing. In the midst of his flight God fed him with earthly food to point him back again to God's own providence which Elijah for the moment could not appreciate. But still Elijah missed the point and continued his flight in fear and near despair, in spite of the fact that the short term food sustained him miraculously for 40 days. What restored him to balance and

brought him back again to see the invisible truth behind the visible? Not powerful miracles but rather God’s repetition of his powerful promises on Mt. Horeb. Even for one of the greatest of the prophets, visible setbacks and temptations can overwhelm the consolation of the gospel when we fail to focus on the promises of God more than on the experience of the moment.

**SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 4:30—5:2**

It is when we fail to grasp that the living Bread from heaven is everything and are deceived into thinking that the temporal is more important, it is then that we become bitter, frustrated, angry, greedy and grasping. For we never have enough of the visible and always see someone else who has more and deserves it less. But when we have everything because we have Christ and his grace, Christ and his forgiveness, Christ and his providential care, then we can afford and will eagerly strive to imitate him. It’s all a matter of perspective, of seeing the importance of the temporal chiefly in this that it is a reminder of the eternal.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 5:11—6:3**

It’s not as though the milk, the elementary teachings, were unimportant and now can be ignored. Rather it is time for us to see that not only have we been saved, but that because we have been saved by so gracious a God we should eagerly desire to grow more and more in love to him. That love in turn finds expression in a new attitude toward life and a new desire to fight the temptations of worldliness and materialism. The new attitude gives rise to a new eagerness to live in service to one another in gratitude to him who gave the precious milk of the gospel.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

352 Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

101 Behold the Lamb of God

169 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

170 Draw Us to Thee

189 Jehovah, Let Me Now Adore You

331 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

352 Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor

358 How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

361 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

436 Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep

454 I Gave My Life for Thee

465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

491 O Master of the Loving Heart

493 Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive

542 Dear Lord, to Your True Servants Give

545 Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit

564 There Is a Balm in Gilead

580 Every Morning Mercies New

616 Feed Your Children, God Most Holy

750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate



# Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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Are the beautiful truths of the gospel, not least those taught by Jesus in John 6, easy for us to grasp? Not at all! In fact for the natural man and his fallen reason they are impossible. This Sunday recognizes the difficulty and calls for the response of a *sacrificium intellecti*, a sacrifice that only the Spirit can work if fallen reason is to be overcome as we receive and rejoice in the saving truths of the gospel.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 6:51-58	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Proverbs 9:1-6	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 5:15-20	
<i>Psalm</i>	1	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your gift of grace that we come into your presence and offer true and faithful service. Grant that our worship on earth may always be pleasing to you, and in the life to come give us the fulfillment of what you have promised; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Alleluia. (Hebrews 4:12 cf. RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 6:51-58

*But Reverend, that just isn't the way I see it!* What pastor hasn't heard that a thousand times from the outsider? It is the natural response to every doctrine in the Bible and most importantly, with the chief doctrines of the Bible. Jesus knows that very well. He even delights in it. And so he tells us things in his Word that by ourselves we would never believe. Then, by his telling it, the mighty Word overcomes us. God made flesh for us feeds us with himself given for the life of the world!? Yes, it is so! The wisdom of God is not merely more clever than the wisdom of the philosopher or anyone else in this world. It is altogether other and unique. It is powerful, so powerful that it overcomes the death of unbelief and the arrogance of fallen reason. Most gladly we bring to him the consequent sacrifice of all our own wisdom and our own opinions and lay them at the foot of the cross as so much foolishness and death—bringing nonsense. Most gladly we go to war against all of our own thoughts that contradict any part of his Word. For all other bread for the soul perishes in its use, and those who eat it perish with it. The gospel is not just one religious tradition among many; it is the only truth that gives life and salvation.

## FIRST LESSON: PROVERBS 9:1-6

Wisdom is personified. Christ is that wisdom. Wisdom is much more than mere knowledge or skill. Wisdom is that attribute of God which is Christ and which is revealed in Christ and which Christ imparts as we eat his

flesh by faith and live. The wise of the world despise the simple. And the simple do not understand the wise. But he who is wisdom knows that we are all simple, too simple to understand the way of salvation or the meaning of life or the point of death. He does not despise and spurn us in our simplicity; he calls; he invites; he lures and entices (as Luther says so often) with a banquet of understanding for this life and for the life to come. He is the host, and he is the banquet. An understanding of him, of ourselves, of life and death—it is all there for those who come and eat, inspired and moved by his invitation.

#### **SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 5:15-20**

Be careful! The days are evil. Only the wise recognize it and know how to triumph over the evil that would drag them down into hell itself. How do we triumph over the evil and rejoice while doing it? We stay close to the source of wisdom and to the power contained in the Word. We read the Bible and sing it. We speak its saving wisdom to encourage ourselves and those who are with us. And so we grow in our joy at leaving behind the wisdom of our own reason and delight instead in his saving and conquering wisdom.

#### **HYMN OF THE DAY**

185 O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace

#### **ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

101 Behold the Lamb of God

222 Songs of Praise the Angels Sang

223 As We Begin Another Week

251 When Morning Gilds the Skies

283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening

325 How Blest Are They Who Hear

327 God Be with You till We Meet Again

328 God Be with You till We Meet Again

331 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

348 Jesus, Jesus, Only Jesus

475 The Man Is Ever Blest

496 Glorious in Majesty

561 Lord, Speak to Us, that We May Speak

610 Now Thank We All Our God

616 Feed Your Children, God Most Holy

720 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands

# Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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It is not only the outsider who turns aside from the Wisdom which is Christ. Many who have heard the Word with us also go away when some part of it conflicts with their own thinking. The *sacrificium intellecti* is not a onetime thing. It is a sacrifice that needs to be renewed often, in every stage of life, as new threats come that oppose Wisdom and its expression in the Word.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 6:60-69	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Joshua 24:1, 2a, 14-18	Exodus 7:8-13
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 5:21-31	Hebrews 11:24-28
<i>Psalm</i>	71	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Alleluia. (2 Timothy 1:10b cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 6:60-69

The stumbling block thrown in his path by the rationalism of many in the crowd does not move Jesus to soften the message. Instead he repeats it with emphasis. Through their own fault many of the hearers, yes, even one of the Twelve, refuse to bend their thinking to his Word. Instead of the attitude of Samuel, *Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening*, their response is, *Listen, we are speaking and this is what WE think!* But Jesus is the one who descended for our salvation. Jesus is the one who went back to the right hand of the Father to rule all things in heaven and on earth. Jesus is the one who will return to judge all mankind. Do you really think your opinion matters or that it is more likely to be on the mark than his? What folly! But still many came and then went away. How many times in your life have you been tempted to go away to what your own wisdom preferred? How many times have you actually done it? But today, hear his voice and answer: *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God!*

## FIRST LESSON: JOSHUA 24:1, 2A, 14-18

We want to answer with Peter in the gospel lesson. We want to answer as well with Joshua and with the children of Israel at Joshua's farewell. Those answers were right answers. But both the history of Peter and the history of Israel demonstrate that such an answer once given isn't necessarily an answer given once and for all. Peter forgot the answer and denied his Lord. Many of the children of Israel soon turned their back on

the Lord and forgot his grace in favor of the gods of this world. What is your answer today? May you repeat it each day this week. May you fix it firmly in your mind as you turn to the business and pleasures of the day, lest you forget, and you also go away.

#### **SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 5:21-31**

Here is a doctrine that moves many in our day to forget the goodness and grace of the Lord and to go away. But notice the context in which the distinction in the roles of husband and wife is placed; it is rooted in a far greater mystery and doctrine, the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ. If the Spirit in the Word performs the miracle of faith in that doctrine, then acceptance of the proper roles of husband and wife should be an easy thing. And if it isn't so easy, well then, to whom shall you go if you decide to be the head of Christ's body instead of letting him be the head? No, we will not go away! Let the world and our own opinions rage as they will. Christ is the head; he gave himself so that by the wisdom of his Word he might become my head and take me to be where he has gone. I will not depart from a single word that the mouth of Christ, my head, will speak, no matter what my inclinations may say, no matter what fallen reason may proclaim, no matter what delusions our decadent culture may cherish! In living out the proper distinctions and roles for man and woman I will remember that such a life should reflect the distinctive roles of Christ the head and myself as his member in union with others striving to live that same reflection.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 7:8-13**

St. Augustine makes the point that the devil cannot create anything; he can only damage and try to destroy what God has made. Here the devil gives it his best shot and ends up with nothing that can survive what God has made by his mighty power in his Word. But notice that Pharaoh's heart nevertheless became hard because he refused to listen. He saw, but he did not hear! Even God's mighty acts, be they in nature or in an extraordinary miracle, do not create faith in those who only see. They need to hear and hear and hear the Word of the Lord (Romans 10:6). Notice, too, that Pharaoh's unbelief is altogether contrary to reason, given the demonstration of God's power through Moses. Many like to say that the gospel is not reasonable, and therefore they will not believe it. In point of fact, when they reject the gospel, they cling to something else that is a delusion and is itself utterly unreasonable. And so God makes fools of those who deem themselves wise.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 11:24-28**

By the standard of the world Moses was a fool. But God trained him early in life to cling to the promises of God rather than to the wisdom and wealth and pleasure of the Egyptians. He had no outward evidence that God's wisdom was preferable and ultimately the only true wisdom. But so powerful was the promise, that in spite of all the evidence to the contrary he continued to cling to the promise implicit especially in the Passover. We used to put blinders on horses so that they would not be distracted by what was going on around them but would pull the wagon straight ahead. May we close our eyes to the distractions of the world's wisdom and pleasure and look only to the wisdom which is not only true but saving.

*The Old Testament reading is used by some in defense of "decision theology." A sermon on this text should avoid both conscious and unconscious encouragement of that error. Joshua himself in the verses immediately following the text wards off any notion of natural ability to decide for God and for obedience. For the*

*believers who heard Joshua's words and for us the reminder of St. Augustine is in place, that God makes willing ones out of unwilling ones and then dwells in those made willing. Once the miracle of faith has been performed by the gospel, the new nature eagerly desires its own continuation, strengthening, and the willing obedience that follows faith.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

556 Rise, Shine, You People

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

186 O Spirit of Life, O Spirit of God  
283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening  
347 Jesus! and Shall It Ever Be  
355 Take the World, but Give Me Jesus  
356 You Are the Way; through You Alone  
395 Seek Where You May to Find a Way  
401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ  
403 I Know My Faith Is Founded  
416 How Firm a Foundation  
424 O God, Forsake Me Not  
437 I Trust, O Christ, in You Alone  
466 Though Thoughtless Thousands Choose  
503 Oh, Blessed Home, Where Man and Wife

505 Love Is the Gracious Gift  
506 Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall  
519 O God of Love, O King of Peace  
534 In the Midst of Earthly Life  
538 The Church's One Foundation  
596 Let Me Be Yours Forever  
601 Your Love, O God, Has Called Us Here  
709 Christ, Your Footprints through the Desert  
733 Rejoice in God  
752 In Christ Alone  
756 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight  
768 How Firm a Foundation

# Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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With this Sunday a modified *lectio continua* from the Gospel of Mark resumes and with it a shift again in emphasis for the third cycle of the Pentecost season. Loosely expressed, the emphasis in this third cycle might be this: *Jesus wants to so deepen our understanding of his grace that he becomes all in all to us.* The particular emphasis in the readings for this Sunday is the truth that all God pleasing obedience must begin in the heart. As so often, the Prayer of the Day affords us a good summary of the thoughts for the day.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 7:1-8, 14, 15, 21-23	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Deuteronomy 4:1, 2, 6-8	Deuteronomy 4:1, 2, 6-9
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 6:10-20	James 1:17-27
<i>Psalm</i>	119c	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord Jesus Christ, preserve the congregation of believers with your never-failing mercy. Help us avoid whatever is wicked and harmful, and guide us in the way that leads to our salvation; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Your words became a joy to me, and the delight of my heart. Alleluia. (Jeremiah 15:15 cf. RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 7:1-8, 14, 15, 21-23

Adding to God's Word is just as bad as subtracting from it. In both cases man sets aside what God has said in favor of what he wants in order to justify himself apart from God's Word and Christ's work. Precisely because the Word of both the law and the gospel is addressed to the heart, it allows for no additions, no subtractions. For to the extent that the heart is cleansed by the gospel, to that extent what flows from it will be clean and in accord with the law. An unclean heart can produce only unclean works, no matter how clean those works may appear on the outside. Those who take the law seriously need first and always the cleansing power of the gospel, lest their outward works be only outward and ultimately a mask for hypocrisy. (Pietism and self righteousness are often the last refuge of a guilty conscience!) On the other hand, those who refuse to take God's law seriously prove thereby that their hearts are still unclean and separated from God. The sin that begins in the heart will not agree to stay there; it will look for ways to get out and express itself. The Pharisees should have recognized that happening in their own hearts: their hearts harbored hatred for Jesus which yearned for expression in acts that ended in murder during Holy Week.

## FIRST LESSON: DEUTERONOMY 4:1, 2, 6-8

God is serious about all of his Word, both the law and the gospel. As the verses left out of the reading (3-5) make clear, those who only take God's gifts seriously soon lose those gifts as a consequence of despising his commands. His commands are good because he who gave them is good. And because he is good, his

abundant blessing through a peaceful and orderly life rests on those who follow his Word. That blessing brings forth a still greater blessing and honor: those who do not know his Word may be moved to hear it by the evidence of God’s blessings on the godly lives of Christians.

**SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 6:10-20**

Faithfulness and obedience to the Word of God are not merely one aspect of life out of many. They are the all-important matters of life that should be reflected in all of the rest of life. There is a life-and-death struggle going on with us, as Satan strives with all his might to pull us back into sin and unbelief. The only help that avails in that life-and-death struggle is the help of God’s own Word, the covering of the gospel and the confidence of faith which comes from it. Armed with the promises of God, we storm the gates of heaven with our prayers for assistance, in the certainty that God will hear us and in his Word answer us. May our awareness of the battle and of the victory Christ gives permeate all that we do at work and at play, at home and away, in our lives with family, with friends, with foes as well.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: JAMES 1:17-27**

Calls for a sanctified life always find their basis and their motivation in the precious gospel message of God’s gifts to us. His gifts are all good and perfect (even and especially the crosses—a point coming up on another Sunday) because God is changeless; he only knows how to give good and perfect gifts that suit our needs and fit our circumstances in life. But to recognize those gifts and to appreciate them and then make use of them in life we need the Word. The Word clears the clutter from life and the temptation to hypocrisy from the heart by showing us the first and best gifts, the gifts of salvation and adoption. With such gifts how could we doubt that anything he does in our lives would be anything but good and perfect? Therefore, listen to the Word; be honest with God in confession; get on with the life that reflects the good and perfect gifts of God. For his gifts are given to us as a reflection of his goodness, so that we can reflect his goodness in our use of those gifts.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

459 O God, My Faithful God

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

162 He Is Arisen! Glorious Word

192 Triune God, Oh, Be Our Stay

205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven

285 The Ten Commandments Are the Law

286 The Law Commands and Makes Us Know

427 We Are the Lord's

455 Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You

459 O God, My Faithful God

471 Renew Me, O Eternal Light

472 Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray

474 Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus

498 Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire

541 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide

583 Now that the Daylight Fills the Sky

782 Lord, Support Us All Day Long

# Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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Unbelief mocks and says that if God did all things well and was the source of all good because he is good, then he shouldn't allow misery and need in the first place. But especially in need and suffering God does all things well; that truth is the center of the Christian's quiet confidence. It is the reason for his hope based on the promises of God and earned for us by the work of Christ and its eternal consequence for us.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 7:31-37	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 35:4-7a	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	James 1:17-27	Acts 3:1-10
<i>Psalm</i>	146	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Alleluia. (Philippians 4:4 RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 7:31-37

That Jesus does all things well is, of course, biblical understatement. Consider just how well he does all things. There is nothing mechanical in his manner or method. He takes into account this individual's very individual needs. The poor man is frightened and comprehends nothing of what the crowd is doing with him. But Jesus understands. Jesus deals with even the momentary fear of the man most gently. That is how he always deals with us, one at a time, with perfect understanding and compassion. He allows the needs that we need and then helps and strengthens and ultimately delivers us at just the right moment and in just the right way. (Notice again Jesus' command after he has helped and healed; he wants no publicity to get in the way of his march to the cross and the ultimate help and salvation that he will win there for us.)

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 35:4-7A

This reading depicts our spiritual needs in physical terms. Physical weakness and trouble mirror the absolute need in which we were born. Troubles, fears, weaknesses of every sort are often God's rich blessings; for they drive us to despair of our own strength and understanding and to be more ready to receive from his Word ears that hear and eyes that see. The reading is a promise of just such help from the Messiah, who alone can solve that absolute spiritual need and who alone rules over the physical reflections of that need so that they are turned to blessing. Yes, he does indeed do all things well!



**SECOND LESSON: JAMES 1:17-27**

Calls for a sanctified life always find their basis and their motivation in the precious gospel message of God's gifts to us. His gifts are all good and perfect (even and especially the crosses—a point coming up on another Sunday) because God is changeless; he only knows how to give good and perfect gifts that suit our needs and fit our circumstances in life. But to recognize those gifts and to appreciate them and then make use of them in life we need the Word. The Word clears the clutter from life and the temptation to hypocrisy from the heart by showing us the first and best gifts, the gifts of salvation and adoption. With such gifts how could we doubt that anything he does in our lives would be anything but good and perfect? Therefore, listen to the Word; be honest with God in confession; get on with the life that reflects the good and perfect gifts of God. For his gifts are given to us as a reflection of his goodness, so that we can reflect his goodness in our use of those gifts.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ACTS 3:1-10**

The (apparently) infrequent miracles of the apostles after Jesus' ascension served to confirm and attest their apostolic office and authority; that is, they were designed to get the attention of the people for the Word that Christ had given them to proclaim. So this man's years of suffering and pain are overwhelmed by the gift of God in a healing that brought him to praise the Savior in whose name he was healed. It also amazed those who saw or heard what had happened to the man. While God does not promise such miraculous healing—most of those begging at the temple gates were not healed—he nevertheless often keeps much suffering from our door, delivers us from such other suffering as he permits to enter it, and preserves us to endure when relief is not soon at hand. The purpose of all three is that we may praise him for his goodness in weal and woe so that others may see in our strength a reason to listen to the Word of the Lord. The witness of suffering Christians no less than that of those delivered from suffering is a powerful pointer to the Savior and his Word.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

235 Praise the Almighty; My Soul, Adore Him

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

226 To Your Temple I Draw Near

236 All Praise to God Who Reigns Above

238 Oh, Bless the Lord, My Soul

253 I Will Sing My Maker's Praises

280 Thy Strong Word

353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

399 To God Be the Glory

427 We Are the Lord's

520 Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old

583 Now that the Daylight Fills the Sky

751 Word of God, When All Was Silent

782 Lord, Support Us All Day Long

# Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

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Just how deeply should the Word of God penetrate heart and life? Jesus himself is the model in whose footsteps we follow, stumbling though that following be.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 8:27-35	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 50:4-10	Jeremiah 38:1-13
<i>Second Lesson</i>	James 2:1-5, 8-10, 14-18	1 Peter 4:12-19
<i>Psalm</i>	116	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord, we pray that your mercy and grace may always go before and follow after us that, loving you with undivided hearts, we may be ready for every good and useful work; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Alleluia. (Romans 15:4 cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 8:27-35

Those who confess that Jesus is the Christ and not just another great prophet or teacher or role model for good living must let even this truth penetrate: Christ came to suffer, Christ came to die; he did it in perfect obedience to his Father; he did it in perfect love for us and for our salvation. His obedience and love were not cheap. Ours should not be either. We are not saved to sin all the more. We are rescued for life and for life eternal but only in the procession of cross bearers following in his footsteps. Notice that our cross bearing is a necessary consequence of believing, but it is not a cause of salvation. Notice, too, the emphasis on the singular in vss. 34-35: *Anyone, whoever*. No one cross-less can hide in the procession of cross bearers; no cross, no Christian. As Peter well understood, the cross is always painful. The cross is anything that we suffer in consequence of our faith in Christ, e.g., outward persecution or ridicule, but even more often, internal struggle with temptations to pet sins and to sins of moral indifference and laziness, and to sins of either self-righteousness or of despair.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 50:4-10

Jesus is the example of patient endurance in suffering. He listened to the Word of his Father and obeyed it perfectly. But no one suffered as he did. What was the outcome of his suffering? In his resurrection he was triumphant both in achieving the divinely ordained goal of our redemption and was delivered from all sorrow and pain. Those who now walk in darkness, i.e., who do not see the salvation and rescue promised by God, should nevertheless trust in his promise; for at the best time, when the goal is achieved, they will

yet see that God is faithful to his Word. God kept his promise to his Son; he will not fail to keep his Son's promise to us!

**SECOND LESSON: JAMES 2:1-5, 8-10, 14-18**

Christians suffer as they bear the cross. That's Jesus' promise. But we should not be the ones who inflict suffering on our brothers and sisters or make what they suffer more painful than it already is. What a shame and a scandal it would be to shun the poor because they are poor and favor the rich because they are rich. Would that not be a cross? For the poor would be tempted to think that God does not love them and has proven it in their poverty and in the way their fellow Christians treat them. The rich would likewise be scandalized by the temptation to think that their favored treatment was due to their merit before God as well as man, that God made them rich because he loved them more. Likewise doing nothing to help the suffering brother or sister presses the cross on their shoulders all the harder; seeing no love from their brothers and sisters, the dark cloud of despair that God does not love them either will hang all the more heavily over their heads.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 38:1-13**

Jeremiah warned the people of the coming judgment of God. How God loved his people! He always sacrifices his best to save the perverse and the rebellious, beginning with his own Son and then with the lives of his apostles and prophets. How disgraceful that for the sake of God's love and faithfulness, the faithful and loving servant receives abuse and persecution! Notice that the most severe persecution and abuse comes from those who should know better, and the only help comes from an outsider, a foreigner. Not much has changed, has it? Warn the nation about the sword of God's justice hanging over a people that defends the murder of children, every form of perversion, and that insists God's truth is relative and not absolute. But do not expect a medal! Expect what God promised: the cross. Or would we rather not? Listen again to the closing words of the gospel lesson.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 4:12-19**

The cross by definition is anything that we suffer as a consequence of our relationship with Christ. It is not the suffering that is ours in consequence of our own sins; the bankrupt gambler, the divorced adulterer, and the imprisoned murderer are receiving the due reward of their evil deeds. But the soul that struggles with temptations to be a wastrel or impure or violent, suffers in the struggle. His conscience suffers when he wants the forbidden as well as when he actually falls. Yes, it is indeed hard even for the righteous to be saved! Even in triumph over temptation there is temptation, the temptation to be self righteous. Therefore, in every day and every way we have but this consolation, that our righteousness can only be the gift of the Crucified, and that God will not despise us in our struggle to follow under his cross.

*The preacher may wish to consider on this Sunday (at least for himself) the difference between the biblical Lutheran theology of the cross versus the sectarian theology of glory. Jesus has promised us, as individuals and as the church, the cross, not outward success at every turn and popularity on every hand. As individuals and as a church in this life we imitate Christ in this life in his state of humiliation, not his state of exaltation. Those who expect always to see outward success in the preaching of the gospel tend to despair of its inherent power when they encounter failure. Lacking trust in the promise of gospel power and looking for a*

*glory here that Christ never promised, they easily cast about searching for gimmicks and programs that will give the success they seek and an easy escape from the cross. Such soon fall into “feel good religion” both personally and in their preaching. The warning of verses 33 and 35 in the gospel lesson should also sting our sinful flesh.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

453 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

105 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded  
176 Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord  
236 All Praise to God Who Reigns Above  
286 The Law Commands and Makes Us Know  
347 Jesus! and Shall It Ever Be  
376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness  
403 I Know My Faith Is Founded  
422 Jesus, Lead Us On  
427 We Are the Lord's  
428 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me

431 I Walk in Danger All the Way  
434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart  
438 In God, My Faithful God  
460 How Can I Thank You, Lord  
463 Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult  
465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken  
476 Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower  
505 Love Is the Gracious Gift  
772 When Jesus Came From Nazareth

# Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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See how deeply the love from God penetrates our heart and soul. We are called to reflect that intense and all embracing grace in our lives and attitudes toward those around us. Indeed that should be our ambition, not the promotion of self, but the imitation of Christ. We learn how fixed we are on that right ambition when we face opposition and contradiction.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 9:30-37	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jeremiah 11:18-20	Numbers 12:1-15
<i>Second Lesson</i>	James 3:13-18	
<i>Psalm</i>	31	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, you call us to work in your kingdom and leave no one standing idle. Help us to order our lives by your wisdom and to serve you in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Alleluia. (2 Corinthians 12:9a)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 9:30-37

How profound the love of Jesus! He is talking about his impending suffering and all the Twelve can think and talk about is the glory they expect to get out of it, and whether someone else might be getting more and therefore too much! Wouldn't you think that at least when he is describing his coming Passion he would get a little attention, just a bit of sympathy? But no! The perversity of the best of us is indeed deep and profound. But the love and compassion of the Savior is a thousand times deeper and more profound! He does not cast them off; he does not cast us off either. Instead he patiently demonstrates his love and bids us once more to be concerned only with receiving it and then imitating it.

## FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 11:18-20

Jeremiah faithfully followed the Word of the Lord in his preaching of woe to those who abandoned that Word and therefore deserved to perish. His message is an evidence of the love of God as well as an evidence of the love of Jeremiah. He preached out of love for his people and to save them from destruction. But what did he receive? The hatred of those he served, so much so that his lament is the lament of Christ himself. Faithfulness always costs and the cross always stings. Ultimately God's wrath will fall on the obdurate, and he will vindicate his own. When that happens, we too will acknowledge that God has acted justly. But until then, let us persevere in the proclamation of his saving gospel, that some may still hear and by its power be

turned and live. How deeply the love of Christ penetrated the heart of Jeremiah is shown by his imitation of that love in serving the undeserving.

### SECOND LESSON: JAMES 3:13-18

Gentleness and unselfish service are virtues that imitate Christ's own perfect gentleness and unselfish service to us. Selfish ambition and jealousy are from the devil; they not only add to the suffering of our fellow man, but also hinder the proclamation of the gospel. For where those virtues are not, the peace that comes from the gospel is crowded out by disorder and strife. Where those virtues are found among God's people, there the gospel of righteousness from him is sown in peace for the everlasting peace of those who hear and receive it. So let us resist the siren songs of *Me first!* and *It's not fair, the way they treat me and don't appreciate me.* Instead let God worry about justice while we worry about serving and then serving yet more. That is what Jesus did all the way to the cross, all the way to hell and back just for us!

### SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: NUMBERS 12:1-15

Of the many points that could be made from this lesson, the one that fits best with the context of this Sunday is the example of Moses in his imitation of the love of Christ. Moses' ambition is to reflect the love of God even to those who caused him to suffer. He didn't say to those who opposed him and now suffer at the hands of God himself: *See what you get? It serves you right!* Rather, even when his sister suffers in consequence of her sins against Moses and God, Moses prays for her. How far do we have to go before we get to that kind of love?

### HYMN OF THE DAY

486 Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us

### ADDITIONAL HYMNS

100 A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

184 O Holy Spirit, Enter In

403 I Know My Faith Is Founded

435 The Will of God Is Always Best

448 In You, O Lord, I Put My Trust

472 Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray

478 With the Lord Begin Your Task

484 Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly

510 I Pray You, Dear Lord Jesus

523 God of Grace and God of Glory

566 We All Are One in Mission

623 God the Father, Son, and Spirit

# Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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The gifts of God are so rich and varied that the devil uses that very generosity in God to stir up jealousy and envy. Expect it in others; find it yourself as well! That weakness makes it crystal clear that our need for a Savior is a constant one. It makes it equally clear that our struggle against our own flesh gives us much more difficulty and anguish than the hostility or the persecution from the world.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 9:38-50	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Numbers 11:16, 24-29	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	James 4:7-12	Philippians 1:12-18a
<i>Psalm</i>	51b	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Mercifully grant, O God, that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, for without your help we are unable to please you; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Alleluia. (Philippians 2:10,11 cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 9:38-50

Again we hear about ambition and Jesus teaches us the difference between God pleasing ambition and ambition that only looks God pleasing on the outside. But how hard that distinction is to learn and live! Everybody wants to be the boss. But Jesus shows us that the important thing is humble service. The great sin is anything in me that gets in the way of such humble service devoted to his glory alone and in accord with his Word. What a powerful preaching of the law there is in this text! Would it ever occur to us to amputate our limbs if they got in the way of our entrance into heaven or of our service to one another? Would we not finally have to cut out our hearts, the seat of desire, and then amputate the head, the throne of memory? After all, the limbs are but the instruments of the heart and the mind, that is, ultimately of the soul itself. How will we amputate those? All that is left to us is to cry: God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Pardon, cleanse, and restore me, that I may serve not self but you, not for my own gain, but for the benefit of those who bear the cross with me!

## FIRST LESSON: NUMBERS 11:16, 24-29

The point here is again the humility of Moses. He rejoiced in the gifts that God gave to his people and desired that those gifts be even more abundant to the glory of God and the benefit of God's children. Thus, as in the gospel lesson, service to the glory of God is our goal, be it the service of the greatest of the prophets, that of the seventy chosen by God to assist, or that of those in the assembly with still other gifts

from the Lord. For not one of us has all of God’s gifts to meet the needs of each one of those we serve. That should keep each one humble as each looks for opportunities to serve while giving thanks for the gifts that others have and use in service. So which is the dominant tendency in our hearts? Do we marvel and give thanks for the gifts that God has given to others and the opportunities he give us for service? Or do we grumble that no one properly marvels at how gifted I am or sufficiently appreciates the service that I render to those who don’t really deserve it?

#### **SECOND LESSON: JAMES 4:7-12**

Before we can serve in a God pleasing way we need to be cleansed from the heart, inside and out. So we draw near in humble confession that we have been too ambitious in self service and thereby have hurt one another and hindered the course of the gospel. “Double minded” is a good description of us as our fallen nature still does battle against the Christian within. Instead of bewailing our own pains, it would be better to lament and cry over the crosses we have imposed on one another when our own jealousy and pride gave birth to strife and loveless faultfinding. The fruit of true repentance is humility that serves with a pure heart such a heart is purified by the gospel and looks for ways to selflessly serve.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18A**

How might you re-write this reading? Might it go something like this: *Nobody is fair, not even God! Look what I get for my faithfulness! Prison, chains, pain, isolation! And do the people I served sufficiently appreciate what I am going through? Not at all! Instead some even take advantage of my absence to recruit followers for themselves at my expense! It’s not fair; I can’t even defend myself, much less lash them with my tongue for their ungrateful self seeking!* But that’s not Paul. He is not in the business of giving God advice on how things ought to be. He trusts that God is in charge, and that even those who are self seeking in their preaching may serve a purpose. To the extent that they still preach the gospel, the Holy Spirit can work to create faith in spite of the motives of the preacher. Paul is not, of course, expressing indifference either to motives or to false doctrine. He is expressing confidence in God and in the power of the gospel. Again, we marvel at how deeply the love of Christ had penetrated the heart of the former persecutor and Pharisee. His is a profound love for Christ caused by the profound love of Christ.

#### **HYMN OF THE DAY**

192 Triune God, Oh, Be Our Stay

#### **ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

121 Jesus, Grant that Balm and Healing

272 I Pray You, Dear Lord Jesus

296 Our Children Jesus Calls

349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

462 Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways

469 Take My Life and Let It Be

471 Renew Me, O Eternal Light

508 Gracious Savior, Gentle Shepherd

513 Lord Jesus Christ, the Children's Friend

586 O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright



# Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

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The closest we can get to a mirror of the love of God for us is the mirror of the love that he wants us to have for one another in the family. The goal of family members is to reflect the love of God for us in self giving love for one another in the family. How tragic that in our society such a mirror is clouded indeed! There is much to repent of and much to strive toward.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 10:2-16	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Genesis 2:18-24	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 2:9-11	Ephesians 5:21—6:4
<i>Psalm</i>	139b	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, in your bountiful goodness keep us safe from every evil of body and soul. Make us ready, with cheerful hearts, to do whatever pleases you; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. I will proclaim your name to my people; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you. Alleluia. (Hebrews 2:12 cf. RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 10:2-16

God takes marriage seriously. Each marriage should be seen by those in it as a most precious gift of God. To violate and destroy that gift is a crime of the first order that brings God's judgment on those who are responsible for breaking the mirror of his union with us in the Church. Such people do damage to their partner and to their children by hindering them in coming to the arms of Jesus by their bad example, by their destruction and despising of God's gift, and by clouding the mirror of the marriage between Christ and his Church. The gospel lesson is a warning not only to those who actually divorce but also to those whose behavior inside of marriage displays a lack of appreciation for the beautiful gift of God in one another and their children. It is also an encouragement to those who are faithful in their family to appreciate God's special blessing through their family for this life and as a mirror for the life of the family with Christ in his marriage with the Church.

## FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 2:18-24

Note how careful God is in his institution of marriage and how eager he is that husband and wife see each other as a special blessing from God. He does not give Adam a wife until Adam first recognizes his need for one. Then he takes the greatest care in providing for that need. It is even greater care than he employed when he created Adam in the first place. Then God himself, without consulting either Adam or Eve, regulates the marriage he himself has instituted in a way that will best serve the interests of the married and

ultimately of the Church and society as well. Adam got the point and spoke the first humanly authored love poem addressed chiefly in praise of God. (The first love poem was God’s own at the creation in Genesis 1:26.)

#### **SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 2:9-11**

*Here begins a series of epistle lessons from Hebrews. This lectio continua runs for seven readings, broken only by the Festival of the Reformation. Those who are preaching on these epistle lessons will want to look ahead to the coming Sundays and plan a little more carefully than is usually necessary. Hebrews is such a tightly written epistle that it is easy to be repetitious in preaching on these lessons if the preacher does not anticipate what is coming up in succeeding Sundays.*

The work of Christ was so difficult and painful because its goal was to make us members of his family. For that to happen he had to make us holy by his work and by his message of forgiveness; otherwise there could be no familial connection between God who is holy in his essence and man who is fallen and sinful in his nature. Now we share this connection with Christ. He is our brother, holy by nature, and we are members of his household, holy by imputation.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 5:21—6:4**

This lesson repeats much of the second lesson for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. But the text certainly merits use on a Sunday devoted to a family emphasis. Christ himself sets the example in his marriage to us. He did everything he did not for his own benefit but for ours. We, as the bride of Christ, gladly submit to such a head, not least in the way we conduct ourselves in our family life. May the head of the family ever see it as his goal and role to do all for the benefit of those Christ has given him in his household, that the family may become a worthy reflection of the love of Christ for the Church and hers for him. Notice, by the way, that there is not word in the reading to suggest that when the husband fails to imitate Christ, the wife has an excuse to fail in her imitation of the Church. Nor is there a hint of a suggestion that the husband has a reason not to act like Christ when his wife fails to submit as willingly and eagerly as does the Church. Clearly the wife has an incentive to carry out her role that her husband may the more easily carry out his, and vice versa. But neither has an excuse to ignore the beautiful, the vital, the most important assignment of striving to imitate the marriage of Christ and the Church in their marriage. The washing of water by the Word makes such imitation a daily, if imperfect, possibility.

*The parish pastor will know very well that what God has to say on the subject of marriage will not please everyone in his congregation. It is all the more imperative that in preaching on these texts the pastor have clearly in his mind to emphasize Thus says the Lord! There is certainly a need for our people to hear what God has to say on the subject from their pastor who expresses God’s Word clearly and boldly without sounding self righteous. It’s a narrow road to walk, but refusing to do so is unfaithfulness to the clear Word of the Lord; taking a side road only leads to confusion and legitimate offense for those trying to live according to the Word of God. It undermines the credibility of the pastor in everything else that he says, and affords an excuse for not repenting to those who have sinned.*

#### **HYMN OF THE DAY**

503 Oh, Blessed Home, Where Man and Wife

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

217 The Head that Once Was Crowned  
257 My Soul, Now Bless Your Maker  
285 The Ten Commandments Are the Law  
292 The Lord Is God; There Is No Other  
296 Our Children Jesus Calls  
307 Wondrous Are Your Ways, O God  
341 Crown Him with Many Crowns  
343 Christ Is the World's Light  
353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness  
370 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name  
408 Christians, While on Earth Abiding  
432 I Am Jesus' Little Lamb  
500 For Christian Homes, O Lord, We Pray  
502 Lord of the Home  
503 Oh, Blessed Home, Where Man and Wife

505 Love Is the Gracious Gift  
506 Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall  
508 Gracious Savior, Gentle Shepherd  
513 Lord Jesus Christ, the Children's Friend  
516 You Parents, Hear What Jesus Taught  
516 You Parents, Hear What Jesus Taught  
538 The Church's One Foundation  
545 Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit  
573 Hark! The Voice of Jesus Crying  
601 Your Love, O God, Has Called Us Here  
601 Your Love, O God, Has Called Us Here  
602 God of Love and God of Marriage  
604 O Love that Casts Out Fear  
709 Christ, Your Footprints through the Desert  
784 O Gracious Lord, with Love Draw Near

# Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

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Next to the attachment to hearth and home, a person's chief attachment is to his purse. So it is not out of order to consider what God has to say about his gifts of wealth and to let him put those gifts in a proper context for us.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 10:17-27	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Amos 5:6, 7, 10-15	2 Kings 5:14-27
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 3:1-6	Hebrews 13:1-6
<i>Psalm</i>	90	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Grant, O merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation. Alleluia. (Isaiah 25:9b cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 10:17-27

This is the context: God's gifts to us of wealth more than most of his other gifts can become snares to our salvation when we treasure them more than the Giver and more than our salvation. From a rhetorical standpoint this reading is one of the most brilliant of all of the discourses that Jesus held during his earthly ministry. First he sets up this wealthy young man who would be a treasure to his mother and to any congregation. He sets him up to learn that he has not even kept the First Commandment and that thereby he has lost all hope of saving himself by the law. Then to drive the point home that salvation is the work of God alone, he sets up his disciples and us to see that we are too attached to his gifts of wealth. We either treasure too much what we have or covet too much what we don't have. We don't want to miss the triple point that Jesus so effectively places before us. Our situation before the law is always a hopeless one, since we all have things that we think we cannot bear to do without, and thereby we forfeit any claim to salvation even on the basis of the First Commandment. We need to examine ourselves to see what those things are that might make us also go away sad from Jesus our Savior. We, too, can only marvel at his grace and goodness, that he would even give us those things which he knows we are tempted to treasure more than we treasure him.

## FIRST LESSON: AMOS 5:6, 7, 10-15

The worship of money and the pleasure it could buy were among the chief sins that Amos denounced. "Seek the Lord and live!" The pursuit of wealth and the ease it can buy will not give life. Quite to the contrary, with wealth as the goal of life, life is forfeit and swept away by the God who gives life and wealth

and who will not endure the insult of having the gift worshipped in place of the Giver. But the days are evil. We have two cars and two houses, two boats and a new this and that whenever we want it. Or we covet those things if we do not have them. So common is the idolatry that we do not recognize it. It is part of our culture and is woven into the fabric of the consumer society. Strict and severe is the pronouncement of the Lord and sharp as can be is the contrast: “Hate evil, love good ... Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy!” May we not go away sad, but longing for his mercy. Rather let us go with a new appreciation of his generosity in giving wealth and in his far greater generosity in showing mercy when we turn to seek him and his grace!

#### **SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 3:1-6**

How will we resist the glitter of gold and the honey taste of luxury, pleasure and ease that so easily become gods and drive all thought of bearing the cross? “Fix your thoughts on Jesus!” In him we have not things nor fleeting pleasure nor pointless ease. In him we have one whose thoughts are constantly fixed on us as he bears his cross before his Father’s throne and intercedes for us. It is He who has won for us an eternal home in heaven in spite of our wandering and our foolish misplaced priorities. Therefore let us learn to be content even as we do the labor necessary for our brief pilgrimage here on earth. Let us see that labor as a means to other ends, i.e., the support of our family, of those in need and of the work of the Church. He will, as he has in the past, see to it that we have enough and often more than enough to carry out those God given responsibilities.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 2 KINGS 5:14-27**

Voltaire noted in his day that the church spent a lot of time denouncing wealth and even more time trying to get its hands on wealth. Naaman had such gratitude for the gift of healing that he wanted to give his wealth to God’s instrument in healing him. Elisha had no wealth, only God’s Word, and did not want to do anything that would cause Naaman to think that he could buy the blessing of God. Ah, but Gehazi, a servant of the Church, had other ideas. He knew how to make greed look good. Judas was his disciple. Nor have they lacked followers since their day. We all need to examine ourselves to see if even our piety is a cloak for avarice. Leprosy on the soul kills just as surely as unhealed leprosy on the body.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 13:1-6**

The reading ties together and sums up the themes of this Sunday and last. It bids us trust in the mercy of God and in his abiding presence in his Word of the gospel. Doing so keeps our priorities where they ought to be: first on him and his Word and then on loving service to our neighbor in family life and in our lives in society as reflectors of his grace and goodness.

*Notice in the readings for today the excellent juxtaposition of law and gospel. A proper preaching of the law always has the first commandment as its foundation. For crimes against the second table of the law flow from our failure to love God perfectly. Any treatment of the law that deals only with the outward disobedience to the second table will fail to show the hearer his continuing, desperate, and absolute need of the Savior and his work. Any obedience to the second table that does not flow from a love renewed by the gospel is but empty Pharisaism, the fruit of Roman legalism or Protestant moralizing. This point, so aptly exemplified in today’s readings, is one that our fathers make repeatedly in the Lutheran Confessions.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

125 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross  
199 In Trembling Hands, Lord God, We Hold  
207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near  
257 My Soul, Now Bless Your Maker  
285 The Ten Commandments Are the Law  
286 The Law Commands and Makes Us Know  
290 One Thing's Needful  
319 On My Heart Imprint Your Image  
320 On My Heart Imprint Your Image  
355 Take the World, but Give Me Jesus  
362 Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest  
415 Be Still, My Soul  
416 How Firm a Foundation

418 My God Will Never Leave Me  
419 If God Himself Be For Me  
421 All Depends on Our Possessing  
424 O God, Forsake Me Not  
438 In God, My Faithful God  
441 O God, Our Help in Ages Past  
477 What Is the World to Me  
494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds  
526 We Are Your People  
755 Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious  
Treasure  
768 How Firm a Foundation  
779 I Sing as I Arise Today

# Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

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This Sunday we see again the striking difference between a Christian and a worshiper of the false gods of this world. The difference is in the way the way that the Christian looks at ambition. No one should be more ambitious than we are. This Sunday that ambition and the reasons for it are defined.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 10:35-45	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 53:10-12	2 Chronicles 26:16-23
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 4:9-16	1 Corinthians 9:7-12, 19-23
<i>Psalm</i>	22	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord, keep your household, the Church, in continual godliness and set us free from all adversities that, under your protection, we may serve you with true devotion and holy deeds; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. Alleluia. (Ephesians 2:10a)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 10:35-45

Once again the disciples, like us, get it wrong. Jesus has just finished telling them of his coming Passion, and all they can think about is worldly ambition, which one of them should be first. Just like he does when discussing family and wealth, Jesus turns everything upside down from the way that we by nature are inclined to look at things. In fact it is our ambition to be first and have our own way that wrecks family life and perverts the proper uses of wealth. Ah, but in Jesus' way both family life and wealth become great blessings. For the ambition is to serve, not to be served. That service is ever asking: *How can I help?* instead of *When is it my turn?* Look who has led by example! The One who alone deserves to be served has served the lowliest of the low. He served me, even me, by coming to find, to rescue, to save me by giving his own life for my ransom.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 53:10-12

The paying of my ransom was no cheap or easy thing. It could not have been more expensive. That's how great my need; that's how great his love. Now the answer to the question, *When is it my turn to be served?* You already have been, and by no less than the one whom God both loved and crushed just for you! Only when that work was completely accomplished and your ransom fully paid did he rise and go into the glory that he deserved as the perfect man and now as the only Savior. For now, we follow in his lowly footsteps; we follow him in his humiliation. In due course, in God's own time, we shall rise and share with him the glory which is his alone by right and which he has purchased for us at such a price.

**SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 4:9-16**

Let us be honest with God. Let us strip away the pretense, pride and self righteousness that we share with the young man in the gospel lesson last Sunday. Let us lay bare before the throne of God the false ambitions we have like those of the disciples in the gospel lesson for today. The sharp sword of God's Word pierces through our hearts and souls so that we can see and know how far we have yet to go and how much we have to confess. Don't be afraid to do it. The Liturgy of Confession at the beginning of the service has already reminded us that there is healing from the high priest and on account of his saving work for us. Leave Confession confident of absolution; leave Confession with the resolve to reorder your ambitions to serve him who one day will give you the rest that he has earned and deserved and reserved for you in heaven.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 2 CHRONICLES 26:16-23**

The alternative to reordering our ambition is to see it grow like a cancer until it destroys us. In Uzziah's case the success that God gave him became a snare. So successful was he in achieving wealth and power that he decided he knew everything better than God did. In his presumption the leprosy on his soul became leprosy also on his body, a disease that made his wealth and power empty and devoid of any satisfaction. There are a lot of people like Uzziah today. Their ambitions and efforts have been blessed by God, so that they imagine that they know it all, including what God should have said in his Word but didn't say. They presume to correct the Bible so that it fits better with their own vain thinking. The mind bent on service in the footsteps of the lowly Savior is content first and foremost with all that God has said.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:7-12, 19-23**

Next to the Savior himself, there is probably no better example of proper ambition than that which Paul gives. If we measure ourselves against the Savior we might only despair. If we measure ourselves against Paul we can at least see one who took Jesus' words about ambition seriously. See what good it did, what a blessing it was and still is for the church! He not only served everyone he could; he served by putting himself in their place, seeing himself as one of them, so that he could apply all the truth of God's Word to their particular situation and circumstance. Notice the last line of the reading: he did it all so that he might also share in the gospel's blessing. Serving with the gospel, the gospel became his anew in every man's circumstance; its depth and its richness he could see and appreciate and apply to himself all the more.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

181 Come, Oh, Come, Life-Giving Spirit

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

117 O Dearest Jesus

150 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia

172 Up through Endless Ranks of Angels

194 Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices

215 Jerusalem, My Happy Home

218 Then the Glory

350 All Praise Be Yours

351 Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus

359 Jesus, My Great High Priest

366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild

376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness

411 What a Friend We Have in Jesus



413 When in the Hour of Utmost Need  
417 I'm But a Stranger Here  
422 Jesus, Lead Us On  
429 What God Ordains Is Always Good  
454 I Gave My Life for Thee  
484 Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly  
491 O Master of the Loving Heart  
492 Son of God, Eternal Savior  
497 This Is My Will

518 Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go  
551 For All the Saints  
588 Abide with Me  
710 Jesus, Once with Sinners Numbered  
715 What Grace Is This!  
741 Take and Eat  
742 What Is This Bread  
746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd  
754 The Tree of Life

# Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

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We strive to serve in a family that mirrors the marriage of Christ and the church; we examine the role that wealth plays and should play in our lives; we in humility seek to reorder our ambition and bring it into line with the Word of God. To help us get it right God himself throws stumbling blocks of suffering in our path. They are gifts of his grace and goodness designed to help us trust his Word and do what he commands.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 10:46-52	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jeremiah 31:7-9	Exodus 4:1-17
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 5:1-10	Acts 2:22-32
<i>Psalm</i>	126	142
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

God, our refuge and strength, have mercy on your Church, as we come in prayer before you. Answer us not in judgment on our sins, but in peace and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. The Lord will rescue me from every evil and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. Alleluia.  
(2 Timothy 4:18 cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 10:46-52

Some suffering comes into our lives as the consequence of our own sins and some as the consequence of the sins of others. But other suffering comes from the hand of God with no immediate or apparent reason. Bartimaeus was blind. There appears no reason for his blindness ... until Jesus passes by. Then and only then two marvelous and heaven sent reasons become evident. One is so that Jesus may again demonstrate his power and his mercy, even as he approaches Jerusalem on the way to the cross. On the way to the cross he is not too busy or preoccupied with his coming suffering that he cannot give himself to the need of one poor soul at a time. The other reason is so Bartimaeus will have a need to cry out for Jesus' mercy. How many are there who never consider their need of Jesus and his Word until disaster or sickness strike? How many are there who do not appreciate the mercy they have enjoyed day after day until they suffer loss? Jesus sends or allows a need to arise so that he can meet it. Whether he meets the need by removing it or by giving point to it and the strength to endure matters little; what matters is that the need brings us to cry out with Bartimaeus for help that he will give in the best possible way. Notice at the end of the miracle Jesus praises Bartimaeus for his faith. Is that not a wondrous thing? Everything about Bartimaeus' faith had Jesus himself as the cause, the source, the content, the goal. But so delighted is Jesus when he creates the miracle of faith, that he praises the one in whom he has created it!

**FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 31:7-9**

What a prophecy from “the weeping prophet”! Jeremiah would not live to see its fulfillment. But he describes the true condition of the exiles who would return, whether all of them recognized that condition or not. The return to God from suffering is always the return of the blind and the lame who can only perish along the way if left to themselves or their own (in)sight and strength. It is always the return of those as helpless as a mother about to give birth. It is always a return of those whose strength and endurance comes alone from God in his grace and mercy. The way is sometimes long and the goal seems impossible for such as these to reach. When God himself throws stumbling blocks of suffering in our path, may we see ourselves to be such as these. May we cry to him for mercy and praise him for the already answered prayer when we are not yet even half way there.

**SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 5:1-10**

Is our suffering the just payment of God for our sinful condition or for some specific sin? To be sure much that we suffer in this life is a consequence of our sins. But it is never payment for them. One and only one could offer sufficient payment. That he succeeded in doing so is proven in God’s answer to Jesus’ anguished cries and prayers in Gethsemane and on the cross: God raised him from the dead and received him again to the glory that is his by right. We follow in his footsteps and learn obedience by suffering patiently and waiting for God’s rescue. [Bear in mind that nouns and verbs of learning and knowing in Greek and Hebrew often distinguish between the learning and knowing that comes from being told something otherwise unknown and the learning and knowing that comes from experience. For Jesus learning obedience is in the latter sense. He didn’t just know about it; he experienced it for us and for our salvation.]

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 4:1-17**

Moses doubtless thought that he was doing just fine in his appreciation for family and for wealth and for the vanity of human ambition. After all he had seen how fleeting everything earthly can be, and now at age 80 he no doubt looked forward to the end of it all. But his life had only begun. God put up a huge detour sign on Moses’ way to heaven. The detour was one Moses did not want to take. But the Savior promised him everything that he would need for the coming long journey along a path strewn with boulders of peril and thorns and thistles of affliction. The elderly among us may look back over a life of countless detours; they may have very good reason indeed to thank and praise God for his goodness along the perilous paths they were obliged to take. The younger and the young among us may think they have the path they will take all figured out; they are in for a lot of surprises along the way. Only one thing is constant: the mercy and grace of God in Word and sacraments. With him as God and his means of grace as constant companions we will face the unknown and its dangers with trust and confidence not in ourselves but in him, in his presence and in his promises.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ACTS 2:22-32**

Look at how completely God rules! He even controls the raging of Satan and the wrath of those who hate him so that their plans come to nothing but blessing for us, even when they succeed in the worst possible evil. For the devil and his allies thought they were getting rid of Jesus; instead what they did with evil intent God worked for our ultimate and eternal good. That’s the paradigm, not the exception. When suffering

comes, even suffering inflicted as the result of other peoples' sins, God turns it all around for our benefit without letting the wicked off the hook. If that causes us to see more clearly our total dependence on him then the devil and his allies have not gained the victory. Quite the contrary, the Risen Christ has reigned in our circumstance and is now enthroned even more in the shrine of our believing hearts!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

438 In God, My Faithful God

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

98 Jesus, I Will Ponder Now

114 Christ, the Life of All the Living

151 Triumphant from the Grave

194 Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices

242 Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices

266 Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above

359 Jesus, My Great High Priest

395 Seek Where You May to Find a Way

397 Just As I Am, without One Plea

399 To God Be the Glory

405 Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink

411 What a Friend We Have in Jesus

413 When in the Hour of Utmost Need

425 Oh, Sing, My Soul, Your Maker's Praises

452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

520 Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old

545 Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit

719 Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia

# Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

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We are coming to the end of the liturgical year. Before we consider the Last Things, we should sum up the whole of the Half Year of the Church.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 12:28-34	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Deuteronomy 6:1-9	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 7:23-28	Romans 13:8-14
<i>Psalm</i>	119a	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, forgive the wrongdoing of your people and be gentle with us in our weakness. Deliver us from the bondage of our sin and direct us to the path of righteousness; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Alleluia. (2 Peter 3:18a cf. NIV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 12:28-34

Given the hundreds of commands in the ceremonial, moral and civil law of the Old Testament and the hundreds more invented by the Pharisees to make the question of this teacher reflected a genuine concern in many a conscience. If I can't even remember all the commands, how can I hope to even begin to do the will of God? Jesus sums it up just as God had already summed it up so often in the law itself. Every command flows from the command to love God perfectly and completely and to love and serve my neighbor. It is important to note along the way that any teaching of the law that does not find its roots in Jesus' summary of the law is just moralizing; moralizing only encourages self righteousness in some and despair in others. To grasp Jesus' summary of the law is to be "not far from the kingdom of God" if such a grasp moves one to cry out for mercy. For no matter which commandment I have kept outwardly, I have never kept it out of perfect fear and love of God and perfect love for my neighbor. At the same time, one who has cried out for mercy will find it alone in this One who gave the law and then gave himself in obedience for us and for our salvation. Such as receive the One who gave the law and who saves from it will want know how to please him in thanksgiving; Jesus' summary of the law tells him that, too. (Note yet again, as so often, how beautifully the Prayer for the Day sums it all up.)

## FIRST LESSON: DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9

If we learned nothing else during the Half Year of the Church we certainly should have learned that God is serious about his Word, and that he and his Word should ever be the center and the focus of our entire life. The giving of the law makes the point very effectively. Pay attention with the whole heart, and let mind and

soul ever be occupied with that Word and will of God. The first and third uses of the law could not be more clearly evident.

**SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 7:23-28**

Standing over the whole of the law is the high priest who gave it, who alone perfectly kept it, and then offered himself as a sacrifice for those who have not and could not keep it. His perfection is eternal, and his high priestly sacrifice avails for all and avails forever. He did love God perfectly and proved it in his perfect love for us as well, a love that resulted in our redemption because of his perfect sacrifice.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 13:8-14**

Love is the fulfillment of the law and the down payment on the debt we owe one another by virtue of the debt that Christ has paid for us all. It is a debt we never fully discharge and one that brings us again and again to the ultimate debt payer for forgiveness and for renewed zeal to continue the love payments. Notice in the closing verses of the reading that God does not leave it to us to define the nature of this love. Immorality as defined by the Word of God cannot be committed out of love to either God or our neighbor, no matter what emotions or a senseless sentimentality may say to the contrary. That's a point that needs to be emphasized these days.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

499 O God of Mercy, God of Might

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

15 Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding  
 152 I Know that My Redeemer Lives  
 169 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus  
 175 Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise  
 204 O God, Our Lord, Your Holy Word  
 220 O'er the Distant Mountains Breaking  
 254 The Day Full of Grace  
 282 Lord, Open Now My Heart to Hear  
 285 The Ten Commandments Are the Law  
 292 The Lord Is God; There Is No Other  
 309 Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord  
 352 Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor  
 359 Jesus, My Great High Priest

373 O Jesus, King Most Wonderful  
 434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart  
 458 May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill  
 462 Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways  
 476 Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower  
 486 Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us  
 498 Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire  
 505 Love Is the Gracious Gift  
 505 Love Is the Gracious Gift  
 506 Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall  
 513 Lord Jesus Christ, the Children's Friend  
 521 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace  
 740 Draw Near

# First Sunday of End Time—Reformation Sunday

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At the Festival of the Reformation we give thanks we have been rescued from the false ways of salvation that could only lead us to ruin and doom. We owe God thanks for that rescue accomplished by his grace alone, on account of Christ's merit alone, and through the means of grace alone. At the same time we remember that apart from unqualified commitment to his Word, grace can be lost and with it the saving faith created through the Word in the one and only Christ, our one and only Savior. Therefore let us hear the Word of the Lord! Prompted by his grace let us recommit ourselves to purity of doctrine that comes alone from the Word, and to a life that reflects our devotion to the Savior who gives himself for us and then to us in his pure Word and sacraments.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 13:5-11	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jeremiah 18:1-11	Daniel 3:16-28
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Revelation 14:6, 7	
<i>Psalm</i>	46	
<i>Color</i>	Red	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious Lord, our refuge and strength, pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your Word, protect and comfort them in all temptations, defend them against all their enemies, and bestow on the Church your saving peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. If you continue in my Word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. Alleluia. (John 8:31, 32 cf. RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: MARK 13:5-11

It should not be a surprise to us that error runs rampant through the world and that both nature and nations are so often in chaos. For that is exactly what our Savior has foretold. Each error, each natural disaster, each country in turmoil should drive us to cling all the more tenaciously to his Word by which alone we are saved in the hour of judgment. For without his pure Word there is only faithless error, fear and torment, and finally a total separation from grace on the Day of Judgment. To retain that Word in all of its truth and purity as the anchor which holds us and the rock on which we find refuge in the storms that threaten destruction, and then to share it, those are the goals of true children of the Reformation. For the very heart and soul of that Word is Christ, the incarnate anchor and rock of our salvation.

**FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 18:1-11**

The Jews of Jeremiah’s day trusted in outward forms that had become empty formalism. They no longer listened to the Word of the Lord which rebuked them for their sins, and thus no longer lived on the forgiveness pictured in the forms. Separated from the Word, they were separated from grace, so that their lives were ruled by the evil that flows from unbelief. Only the reformation that comes from the Word, that comes by grace, that comes through faith could save them from the doom promised by God; for he will always take his Word seriously, whether we do or not. Like clay, may he re-form us to be vessels of his grace!

**SECOND LESSON: REVELATION 14:6, 7**

This standard Reformation Epistle lesson (used at Luther’s funeral) extols both the grace of God and the true glory of the preaching ministry. For it is God alone who preserves his Word from the destructive wiles of the devil and wicked men on earth. Grab at it and drag it down though they will, God still holds his Word aloft as a saving breath of the Spirit wafting down on those who hear it. It is the great glory of the preaching ministry that the saving message which ascribes all glory to God is likewise preserved from age to age. Where God receives all the glory for our salvation, we need not dread what men may do, nor even the judgment of God himself. May he by his grace preserve us faithful to his Reformation message and ministry!

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: DANIEL 3:16-28**

“The God we serve is able to save us from [the fiery furnace]...But even if he does not, we want you to know, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up!” Luther could have chosen these words for his motto (though there was certainly nothing wrong with the words he did choose from Ps. 118:17). They as well could serve as the motto for the faithful in every generation who would rather die than give up a single word, from the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. Think of the holy martyrs through the ages, from the time of Cain through the murders of Stalin and Chairman Mao; think of the hundreds of thousands of Lutherans slaughtered or made refugees during the Thirty Years War and more recently by Hitler and then by the communists; think of the pious faithful who came to these shores to escape persecution by the Protestants and even those who called themselves Lutherans in the state churches of Saxony and Prussia. The list goes on and on. So great is the love of God for the truth that he leaves no age without martyrs to it! May we be counted worthy to be their heirs when the time comes for us to join them!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

204 O God, Our Lord, Your Holy Word

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

200 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God  
 201 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God  
 203 Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word  
 205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven  
 239 Glory Be to God the Father

289 Preserve Your Word, O Savior  
 291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word  
 293 God’s Word Is Our Great Heritage  
 329 Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing  
 349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure



390 Salvation unto Us Has Come  
403 I Know My Faith Is Founded  
415 Be Still, My Soul  
419 If God Himself Be for Me  
474 Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus

541 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide  
546 Lord Jesus, You Have Come  
557 On Galilee's High Mountain  
781 I Lie, O Lord, within Your Care

# Second Sunday of End Time—Last Judgment

The readings for this Sunday set in sharp contrast the attitudes of believers and unbelievers. The attitude of the unbeliever to any talk of judgment by God can only be denial or terror. But the attitude of the child of God is formed by the Word of God. As that Word has created his faith during his life on earth, so it molds his confidence in the face of death and judgment. But the Word of God and the faith it creates will be seen as fully vindicated by death and judgment. Therefore we look forward to the day on which we pass into the courtroom of God to hear the “Not guilty!” verdict which brought us to faith in the first place. There is no better preparation for death and judgment than a firm clinging to that gracious verdict. There is no better life than the one that has that verdict as its center and the motivation for everything in it.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 5:19-24	John 5:19-30
<i>First Lesson</i>	Malachi 4:1, 2a	Malachi 4:1-3
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 9:24-28	
<i>Psalm</i>	90	
<i>Color</i>	Red	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God Almighty, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit that we may always look forward to the end of this present evil age and to the day of your righteous judgment. Keep us steadfast in true and living faith and present us at last holy and blameless before you; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. Alleluia. (Matthew 24:42 RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 5:19-24 [25-30]

Jesus assures us that there is a happy harmony between himself and his Father in everything. Therefore we need not fear that what he has said might be contradicted by his Father. Quite the contrary: the Father loves his incarnate Son so much that everything has already been handed over to him. What a delight and a joy now, in the hour of our death, and on the Day of Judgment to hear his Word! By his Word we are assured of everlasting life. Therefore worship the Son who has won that life for us. What else is there really worth doing? May all of our life be an act of honor to the Son of God, our Judge, our Life, our Savior, our All!

## FIRST LESSON: MALACHI 4:1-2A

What dread and horror is stored up for those who despise his gracious Word! So much for the notion, already dispelled in the gospel lesson, that it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe something. There is one way of salvation and one way only. The “modern man” who imagines that nothing is true until he believes it or who dreams that God can hardly wait to accommodate himself to human

opinions and intentions is in for a very rude awakening. Is our reluctance and lack of zeal for sharing the gospel the fruit of “modern man’s” foolish delusions?

### SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 9:24-28

The key to our certainty of heaven is in the hands of our Great High Priest. How do we know that death and judgment will be blessed and happy for us? We know that with certainty because it was for our blessedness that Christ came in the first place; it was for our eternal happiness that he has entered into his glory effectively to intercede for us with his blood. He came to win heaven for us, and he succeeded on his mission. How do we know for sure? His Word says so, and God does not lie! He never failed in life; he will not fail us in death; he will prove faithful on the Day of Judgment.

### SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: MALACHI 4:1-3

[See the First Lesson comments.] In the judgment all the weariness of the flesh will fall away, and we will leap for joy at the just judgment of God. Those who have rejected his just judgment in this life will not be able to escape in the life to come. Assuming that we did what we could to share the gospel message with them, we will not mourn at the misery they have brought down on themselves by their despising of so great a blessing as that won by the Savior at so great a cost to him.

*There is so much in the Greek of the gospel lesson! But especially verse 29 merits attention (if the preacher is following the suggestion of adding vss. 25-30 to the gospel lesson). Notice the two different participles, both translated with “done” in the NIV. There is a distinction often observed in the New Testament between the verbs poieo and prasso; the latter has more the sense of practice, rather than just do. It’s no small difference; to practice evil is to work at it, to relish and cherish it, to want it and not want to be rid of it. That’s what we call mortal sin, that is the denial and death of saving faith. If we just leave without comment the translation “those who have done evil,” we may drive a sensitive conscience or memory to despair.*

### HYMN OF THE DAY

382 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

### ADDITIONAL HYMNS

22 O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide

25 The King Shall Come

123 Lord Jesus Christ, You Set Us Free

166 The Day of Resurrection

167 Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense

207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near

208 Great God, What Do I See and Hear

209 Day of Wrath, Oh, Day of Mourning

211 I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name

257 My Soul, Now Bless Your Maker

277 God, We Praise You

351 Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus

376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness

419 If God Himself Be For Me

434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart

441 O God, Our Help in Ages Past

588 Abide with Me

608 I Fall Asleep in Jesus' Wounds

750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate

# Third Sunday of End Time—Saints Triumphant

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As we approach the end of all things and the great Day of Judgment, we want to make sure we have it all straight; the readings for this Sunday help us prepare by their careful description of what is to come, so that we will not fear as we look and long for the day of his appearing. Rather, clinging to his grace in Word and sacraments we strive to live as though who know what to expect at the end of it all.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 5:25-29	Mark 13:24-27
<i>First Lesson</i>	Daniel 12:1-3	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 10:11-18	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
<i>Psalm</i>	118	
<i>Color</i>	White	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God and Savior, you have set the final day and hour when we shall be delivered from this world of sin and death. Keep us ever watchful for the coming of your Son that we may sit with him and all your holy ones at the marriage feast in heaven; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. Alleluia. (Revelation 7:15a)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 5:25-29

[Cf. the notes at the conclusion of last Sunday's commentary if you are dividing the John 5 gospel lesson into two Sundays.]

## THE SUPPLEMENTARY GOSPEL: MARK 13:24-27

God's mighty acts of judgment and grace in New Testament times have Old Testament parallels. But the ultimate acts of judgment in the New Testament are a thousand fold more terrifying, just as the acts of grace are incomparably more beautiful and glorious. What terror the Flood inspired in the perishing! What terror beyond comparison will fall and fall forever on those who perish in the judgment on the Last Day! What grace Noah and his house experienced in their rescue through the water that destroyed the world! What grace beyond compare as the saints rise with the angels through the clouds into eternal bliss and the wedding feast of the Lamb as all of the visible creation collapses around them!

**FIRST LESSON: DANIEL 12:1-3**

The God who protected his elect in this life will certainly not abandon them in death and in the Day of Judgment. Those who lived in such lowliness, following in the footsteps of their Savior in his humiliation, will rise in triumph and live with him forever in glory. The fate of the damned, who do not know or who despise his gracious Word, impels us to labor with all our might to bring them to the righteousness of the gospel. What a glorious special reward of grace awaits all those who labor thus! What a blessed added incentive to all, especially to pastors, to share the saving Word!

**SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 10:11-18**

Notice especially the Greek in verse 14: justification is expressed with a perfect active indicative, sanctification with a present passive participle! Already finished is the work of our salvation through that one great sacrifice of our Great High Priest. Therefore, clinging to his Word and animated by it, we are confident of the verdict on that great day. At the same time, likewise clinging to the Word and animated by it, we are becoming holy in life. Living on his forgiveness, we strive to become in life the saints that we already are by grace.

*Note: Few English translations capture the Greek in verse 14 as well as Luther's German translation; the pastor may wish to check it.*

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18**

What a day that will be! Therefore encourage one another with the certainty of its coming and the total and utter blessedness of the saints in heaven and the saints on earth who will finally be joined in perfect harmony with the the Lord. No, we will not despair at the death of those who die in Christ. No, we will not live in dread of our own funeral. Rather with confidence in the Savior who promised it, we will drive away such despair and dread with the happy contemplation of the blessedness that awaits us. For he would not die and rise in vain; nor could he ever lie to us. *Even so, Come Lord Jesus!*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

29 Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending  
 69 Across the Sky the Shades of Night  
 147 Like the Golden Sun Ascending  
 158 I Am Content! My Jesus Lives Again  
 170 Draw Us to Thee  
 207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near  
 208 Great God, What Do I See and Hear  
 211 I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name  
 213 Forever with the Lord  
 213 Forever with the Lord  
 214 Jerusalem the Golden

219 Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See  
 327 God Be with You till We Meet Again  
 328 God Be with You till We Meet Again  
 394 Blessed Are the Saints of God  
 415 Be Still, My Soul  
 417 I'm But a Stranger Here  
 434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart  
 466 Though Thoughtless Thousands Choose  
 538 The Church's One Foundation  
 550 Behold a Host, Arrayed in White  
 551 For All the Saints

605 Asleep in Jesus! Blessed Sleep

606 For Me to Live Is Jesus

618 Before the Lord We Bow

704 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

727 There Is a Higher Throne

728 Jerusalem the Golden

729 There Is a Blessed Home

730 Blessed Are They

731 The King Will Come at Age's End

776 Sing with All the Saints in Glory

# Last Sunday of End Time—Christ the King

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Never could there be a king like Christ, our king. Beyond all comparison is the rule he exercises in time and in eternity. Incomparably great therefore is also our joy in worshiping him even now as we await his triumphant return to transform our worship in faith and under the cross to worship in sight and in glory.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 18:33-37	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Daniel 7:13, 14	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Revelation 1:4b-8	
<i>Psalm</i>	45	
<i>Color</i>	White	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus Christ, by your victory you have broken the power of the evil one. Fill our hearts with joy and peace as we look with hope to that day when every creature in heaven and earth will acclaim you King of kings and Lord of lords to your unending praise and glory; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Alleluia. (Revelation 22:13)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 18:33-37

As the king is like none other, so his kingdom is also like none other. Ruled over by a king who even now appears so lowly and powerless, the kingdom is concerned with what is important to the king. And what is that? The truth! For it is by truth of the gospel, not the power of this world and its rulers, that he saves. Unconcerned with his appearance of impotence and unconcerned as well with our own appearance in weakness, we press forward to hear the truth, to hold to it, to share it and to die in its possession for life eternal.

## FIRST LESSON: DANIEL 7:13, 14

Christ has always been the one center and the entire focus of all history. That was true in Daniel's time and will still be true at the end of time. Thus in a very real sense there is no other king—never has been, never will be. As he is, so is his kingdom. Oh, how foolish those little men, who strut their moment on history's stage and imagine that history is about them. Oh, how foolish I am when I do the same! But to be called by the gospel in his kingdom and under his gracious rule, then to worship and serve him in his kingdom, that's what life is about! That alone gives life true focus, true purpose and noble and glorious end.

**SECOND LESSON: REVELATION 1:4B-8**

Of all the magnificent ways in which Christ could have shown his glory, he picked this one: to redeem us by his suffering and death that we should live with him for all eternity! All by itself that defines the nature of grace. How we long to see him as he is, to perfectly worship him whose greatest triumph was the cross for us and for our salvation! Some day we shall; for he has promised it, he who is our King, the center of all that can be spoken that is true and good, the ruler of time and eternity.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

217 The Head that Once Was Crowned

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

25 The King Shall Come

29 Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending

31 O Lord of Light, Who Made the Stars

85 O God from God, O Light from Light

103 Glory Be to Jesus

193 Come, Now, Almighty King

195 Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty

216 Saints, Behold! The Sight Is Glorious

217 The Head that Once Was Crowned

239 Glory Be to God the Father

240 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

278 Holy God, We Praise Your Name

341 Crown Him with Many Crowns

344 At the Name of Jesus

361 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

368 O Savior, Precious Savior

369 Beautiful Savior

373 O Jesus, King Most Wonderful

496 Glorious in Majesty

704 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

731 The King Will Come at Age's End



