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Jonathan E. Schroeder, Gen. Editor

Year B
by
Daniel M. Deutschlander

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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

Advent

In Advent the Word of God bids us prepare for the coming of Christ. The readings for Advent have this urgency to them: Since he is surely coming again in judgment, we desperately need for him to come to us first in grace. For without that coming in grace we will perish at his coming in judgment. The Prayer for the Day on each Sunday in Advent is especially beautiful, worth repeating perhaps in the sermon introduction or highlighting in the worship folder. These ancient prayers were said by many of the faithful even during the week when children would take turns reciting them as they lit the candle(s) on the Advent Wreath.

First Sunday in Advent

He comes both to destroy and to save. Get ready!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 13:32-37	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 63:16b, 17; 64:1-8	Genesis 6:1-3, 5-14, 17-22
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 1:3-9	1 Peter 3:18-22
<i>Psalm</i>	24	
<i>Color</i>	Blue or Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Alleluia. (Revelation 22:20)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 13:32-37

Those who are busy doing their own thing, serving self, looking only for the cute and entertaining things that have become such a part of the world's Christmas culture, will not be ready for either his coming in grace or his coming in judgment. Make no mistake about it: He comes! He comes in grace! He comes in judgment! How then should we prepare for both comings? We do well to turn our eyes away from the glitter and the clutter of the world and focus them instead first on our need for his coming and then on his sure and certain promise to fulfill that need when he comes. We eagerly prepare by repentant watching.

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 63:16B, 17; 64:1-8

Throughout history he has promised to come in grace to rescue those who are ready and to come in judgment on those who could not be bothered with him. In the Old Testament he came in his mighty acts to rescue the Church always on the brink of perishing among those who did not watch and did not prepare, as well as on those who got tired of waiting and turned away from him to live in their favorite sins. That is the way he always acted then; that is the way he still acts now. Oh, how badly we need his coming in grace! We are so fouled with sin and so frail to do anything but sin. Our best preparation is to admit it and to cry out: *Come, O LORD and save us! We trust your promise!* He keeps his promise to come and save. He keeps his promise to come and destroy. He will still keep that promise. Christmas assures us that he keeps his Word.

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-9

Since he is most surely coming, how shall we watch and how shall we prepare, so that his coming to us will be in grace and not in judgment? He has not left us on our own when it comes to the tools necessary to prepare for his coming. Just as a master of the house leaves his servants with the tools necessary for their

work, so he has given us tools for service as we watch for his coming. Those tools are found in his Word. It is by the Word that he made us his servants in the first place; it is by his Word that he keeps us faithful in service. If you want to be ready for Christmas, if you want to be prepared for judgment, cling to the gifts of forgiveness in the Word and then live in the use of your Christian gifts in service to one another to help them also prepare for his coming.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 6:1-3, 5-14, 17-22

The corruption of the world was so great that the very existence of the church was threatened. But God promised Noah that he would come and save, that he would come and destroy. For 120 years he promised thus to come; and Noah preached for 120 years. His preaching showed how patient and loving God is, that for so long a time he held out the means of rescue from the judgment that would fall on those who were not prepared. He did everything he could to make his coming for those who heard Noah a coming in grace and not in judgment. Then he kept his Word. He came. In his coming he saved the church by water. In his coming he judged the world by that same water.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 3:18-22

The corruption has not changed and therefore we can be sure that God will still keep his Word; he will come and save; he will come and destroy. But just as he provided an escape from judgment in the preaching of Noah and then in the water that floated the ark, so he has provided an escape from judgment that again will most certainly come. The escape from judgment he himself provides by coming in grace. He washes us from the corruption that merits his judgment in the washing of water by the Word. God himself gets us ready for his coming. He has kept his promise and keeps it still, to grant us salvation before his coming judgment.

HYMN OF THE DAY

2 Savior of the Nations, Come

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

3 Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates
 4 Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates
 7 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers
 9 Jesus, Your Church with Longing Eyes
 15 Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding
 22 O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide
 30 Rise, Arise
 32 When Sinners See Their Lost Condition
 220 O'er the Distant Mountains Breaking
 297 Baptized in Water
 363 The King of Glory Comes
 438 In God, My Faithful God

456 Forth in Your Name, O Lord, I Go
 472 Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray
 557 On Galilee's High Mountain
 597 May God the Father of Our Lord
 701 Zion, at Your Shining Gates
 711 Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure Eternal
 718 No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet
 731 The King Will Come at Age's End
 736 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized
 737 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It
 739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me

Second Sunday in Advent

Since his coming is sure and so important, he sends out forerunners in the footsteps of St. John the Baptist who help us to make proper preparation for his coming. They do that with a message not their own. They do it with the message that he himself has given. Pay close attention to those heralds of the coming Lord, the prophets and apostles, and to the pastors and teachers in our midst who have succeeded them to get us ready for his coming.

Notes: *Dear Pastor, take special note of the gospel lessons for this Sunday and next Sunday. There is no room in the pulpit for the big head, for no one is more lowly than we are. There is no room for being depressed or in despair either, for there is no work more glorious than ours, the work of preparing people for the coming Christ at Christmas and on the Last Day!*

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 1:1-8	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 40:1-11	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Peter 3:8-14	
<i>Psalm</i>	85	14
<i>Color</i>	Blue or Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By his coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; 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. Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. All mankind will see God's salvation.
Alleluia. (Luke 3:4, 6 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 1:1-8

Since he is coming, as we heard last Sunday, both to destroy and to save, the sending of forerunners to help us prepare is a special mark of the Savior's grace and kindness. Notice that the forerunner is the lowliest man in the world: He is not even fit to untie the shoes of the one whose coming he proclaims. Since he is so lowly, no one needs to be afraid to listen to him; he will not scare us away. The one whose way he prepares is so eager that we be ready that the messenger and the message alike are lowly. But the message is powerful at the same time. For the message is one of forgiveness, a message that washes away sin and guilt in the Word and in the water, so that those who receive it will be fit for the only one who is great: Our coming Savior King. Give thanks to God that for these thousands of years and to this very day God has sent forerunners to prepare us for his coming at Christmas and on the Last Day, so that his coming for us would be a coming in grace, not a coming in dread and terror. Heed their call to repentance and trust in the Word and work of the coming Savior.

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 40:1-11

The message of God’s messengers has not changed. It is a message that prepares us for his coming both at Christmas and on the Last Day. The messenger cries out: We are nothing; He is everything. We are born to die; He comes to give life. We know nothing and are sure of nothing; his Word of grace and pardon lasts forever and gives the pardon and grace that it promises. Crane your necks. Stand on tiptoes. Listen to his footsteps in the voice of the apostles and prophets, in the Word proclaimed this day from the pulpit. That’s how the Savior King himself prepares you for his coming.

SECOND LESSON: 2 PETER 3:8-14

A little child keeps asking during Advent: *Is Christmas here yet?* With like eagerness we ask the Savior King’s messenger: *How come it takes so long?* The messenger has come in fulfillment of God’s promise to send messengers. The messenger assures us that the promise of his final coming also will be kept, just as surely as the promise of his first coming was kept. Therefore don’t lose heart in the midst of all the distractions that the world offers to make us forget our chief business of being and getting ready for his coming. Those lost in the distractions will meet him with dismay. Let us keep craning our necks and standing on tiptoe, busy with obedience to his Word and cherishing each proclamation of the message that helps us to prepare.

HYMN OF THE DAY

16 On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

11 Comfort, Comfort All My People
 13 There’s a Voice in the Wilderness Crying
 14 Arise, O Christian People
 20 When All the World Was Cursed
 21 Hosanna to the Coming Lord
 27 O Jesus, Lamb of God, You Are
 205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven
 207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near
 222 Songs of Praise the Angels Sang
 257 My Soul, Now Bless Your Maker
 275 Blest Be the God of Israel
 376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness
 508 Gracious Savior, Gentle Shepherd
 544 Preach You the Word
 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving
 570 O Christians, Haste
 702 Prepare the Royal Highway

Third Sunday in Advent

Most people don't want the Savior who promised to come. Do you?

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 1:6-8, 19-28	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 61:1-3, 10, 11	Malachi 4:1-6
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24	
<i>Psalm</i>	71	
<i>Color</i>	Blue or Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Hear our prayers, Lord Jesus Christ, and come with the good news of your mighty deliverance. Drive the darkness from our hearts and fill us with your light; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you. Alleluia. (Matthew 11:10 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

John was God's spokesman called to prepare the people for the Savior who comes in grace and in judgment. Especially those who came to question him should have known that. For everything that he said and did was in complete agreement with the Word of God. But they were not satisfied with John or with his message. In complete humility he pointed to the light that was about to shine when Christ would begin his public ministry. But they didn't ask John about that light. They just asked him about himself, and with each answer he gave they showed their dissatisfaction. A lot of people still just want the twinkling of Christmas tree lights and the glitter of tinsel. They do not want the Light of the world who will dispel the darkness of unbelief with the light of the gospel. They may want something at Christmas that looks a little religious. But they do not want to confess with John that they are all darkness and foolishness, all sin and perversity, until the Light comes to expel the darkness of unbelief and save by his works and not our own. What do you want for Christmas?

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 61:1-3, 10, 11

It is an astonishing thing that so many are not satisfied with the salvation that God provides in the coming Christ, the Christ proclaimed by faithful forerunners. For that salvation is like gold compared to the tinsel that so many favor instead. Jesus told the people that these words of Isaiah had reached their fulfillment in his coming and in his work. And in response they wanted to kill him! But look how beautiful it is, the salvation he comes to bring! One priceless gift after another, each one designed to bless us in this life and to make sure that we have what we need to stand before God when he comes to judge. Will you be satisfied

with the Christmas presents he brings at his first coming? Or will you prefer the tinsel of your own will and works apart from him and thus be unprepared at his next coming?

SECOND LESSON: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

Cherish the message that comes from God’s Word. Wrapped in that message are the most beautiful of Christmas presents, bought by Christ and carried to us by the Holy Spirit. The message prepares you for the real Christmas and for the real joy that God wants you to have in Christmas. It is the joy of peace with God even when conscience accuses; don’t despise the preaching of that message as though it were old news not worthy of repetition. Test all the customs of Christmas in your heart and home, and hold fast to those that focus on Christ. Shun the evil, the debauchery that many pass off as *Christmas Spirit*. The *Christmas Spirit* is the joy of holiness because of sin washed away. It is the joy of knowing that God is faithful and will not leave us or forsake us no matter what happens to us in this life; for the Light of the world is on his way, right around the corner, and he will not disappoint or fail to keep his Word!

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: MALACHI 4:1-6

It’s not an idle question: Do you want the Savior who was promised? He is the only Savior there will ever be. Those who despise the message of his coming either because they don’t like the messenger or because they are too proud to receive salvation as a gift, will be humbled. Make no mistake about that! Their humbling will be devastating, complete, everlasting. Fathers, prepare your children for the real Savior, the real gift at Christmas. Children, turn your ears to your father’s words and make ready to receive the only gift that matters, and the only one that will save when he comes again in judgment.

HYMN OF THE DAY

14 Arise, O Christian People

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

11 Comfort, Comfort All My People
 12 Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes
 15 Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding
 18 O Lord, How Shall I Meet You
 19 O Lord, How Shall I Meet You
 20 When All the World Was Cursed
 22 O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide
 81 Arise and Shine in Splendor
 86 The Only Son from Heaven
 93 Hail to the Lord's Anointed
 183 Holy Spirit, Light Divine
 254 The Day Full of Grace

311 Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness
 325 How Blest Are They Who Hear
 376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness
 408 Christians, While on Earth Abiding
 416 How Firm a Foundation
 424 O God, Forsake Me Not
 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving
 577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations
 586 O Splendor of God's Glory Bright
 768 How Firm a Foundation
 771 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

Fourth Sunday in Advent

What's the best way to prepare for his coming? It's not with frantic doing. It's not with a focus on what we have done or promise to do. It's not with how we will pay back what he comes to bring. The best preparation for Christmas is a *readiness to receive*.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 1:26-38	
<i>First Lesson</i>	2 Samuel 7:8-16	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 16:25-27	
<i>Psalm</i>	89	
<i>Color</i>	Blue or Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the burden of our sins and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel. Alleluia. (Matthew 1:23)

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 1:26-38

Luther notes that the Virgin Mother of God received the message of the Incarnation with a simple, *Yes!* She did not shave her head and enter a convent. She did not set herself up on a throne to be worshiped. She did nothing but receive. Notice the Greek word for *word* that is used in vs. 38; it's not the usual word that we expect, the word *logos*. It's *rymma*. The two words can be synonyms. But the latter sometimes connotes a sound, the full meaning of which is not entirely grasped or understood, as distinguished from *logos* which conveys a message with a clear meaning. That's how receptive she was: She did not pretend to grasp all that the angel said or its full implication. All she knew was that the message came from God, and that whatever he was about to give—even his only begotten Son!—she was ready to receive. Note, too, that the angel has beautifully summarized the whole doctrine of the *Unio Personalis* in the Annunciation. That's who God promises us at Christmas—true and complete God, true and perfect man in one person. *Be it unto me according to your rymma!*

FIRST LESSON: 2 SAMUEL 7:8-16

Both the coming in grace and the coming in judgment are prefigured in the promise to David. In the gospel lesson their fulfillment is about to be made perfect. The Son of God and Mary's Son will create a home for God's people. The Son of God and Mary's Son will be punished for their sins. The Son of God and Mary's Son will remain forever to shield and shelter and save those whom God brings into his eternal house and kingdom. What's left for us to do? Nothing but to welcome and receive him!

SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 16:25-27

In the midst of all the hustle and bustle of these last moments before Christmas, find time to be quiet, to be alone, to shed tears of joy and gladness: He, the sum of all that God has to say to us, is about to descend once more to the lowly manger of our hearts! *Be it unto me according to your rymma! Come Lord Jesus!*

HYMN OF THE DAY

23 Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

2 Savior of the Nations, Come

24 The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

31 O Lord of Light, Who Made the Stars

39 Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One

41 Let All Together Praise Our God

76 Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love

93 Hail to the Lord's Anointed

270 We All Believe in One True God

271 We All Believe in One True God

358 How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

399 To God Be the Glory

552 By All Your Saints Still Striving

The Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Eve

It's almost a shame to preach this night and the next morning! The lessons alone are so sublime, so perfect, so beautiful! We might wish that we could just read them and then fall on our knees with the shepherds to worship and adore. So keep it simple. Let the message do its work with a minimum of interference from us. *Hodie Christus natus est! Adoremus te Christe!* We have come to receive him, and with the saints and angels we sing his praises for keeping his promise to come to us.

Notes: Notice again the beauty, the simple elegance, of the Prayer for Christmas Eve. It sums up the whole of Advent as the time of preparation for both his first coming and his second coming.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 2:1-20	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 9:2-7	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Titus 2:11-14	
<i>Psalm</i>	96	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true light. Grant that as we have known on earth the wonder of that light, we may also behold him in all glory in the life to come; through your only 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. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. Alleluia. (Luke 2:11)

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 2:1-20

Could anyone love you more? God is born in a barn. The angels sing, not to their God or his Mother, but to the shepherds. He comes to the lowly who have nothing to give him, who only want to receive. Nothing must mar this lowliness that exalts the greatness of God's love. It's worth noting, if only in passing, that the angels rejoice! We might have expected them to be angry or at the very least to weep. He whom they love perfectly has humbled himself completely in order to suffer and die for fallen mankind. We might have expected their hearts to ache, or even to ask, *How come for them and not for our fallen fellow angels?* But there is none of that. So perfectly is their will in harmony with the will of God that they rejoice beyond measure that he whom they worship and adore has come down from heaven just for you, just for me! "Let us hasten to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about!" Don't talk about bringing him a present—not today. Today he is the only present! Just receive! Just sing!

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 9:2-7

And who is he who has now kept his Word, he for whom we have been preparing through all of Advent? He is everything! For the darkness of our unbelief he is the source, the content, the goal of faith. For the foolishness of our fallen intellect and the confusion of our minds about the reason and goal of life, he is the Wonderful Counselor. For the perversity of our self worship he is the God who saves us from ourselves. For our orphan state since the Fall, he is our everlasting Father. For the torment of our conscience and the terror of an eternity if he had not come, he is our Prince of Peace and our Comforter. For the chaos of lives that are out of our control, he is the government that brings the order of law and gospel that lasts forever. Yes, he is everything, so much more than we could ever have imagined or even wished for. *Welcome art Thou, O Christ, my all in all!*

SECOND LESSON: TITUS 2:11-14

Given all that he is and all that he brings when he comes, what other goal could we have for life than to live with him and in him and through until he comes again. The reading is a good bridge from Advent to preparation for New Year: His salvation and receiving it in Christmas gets us ready to plan to live in it until he comes again.

HYMN OF THE DAY

- 37 Once Again My Heart Rejoices
- 38 From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 34 Now Sing We, Now Rejoice | 60 Silent Night! Holy Night |
| 40 O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is | 61 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing |
| 44 Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light | 63 Angels We Have Heard on High |
| 46 Your Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We | 65 O Little Town of Bethlehem |
| 47 Behold, a Branch Is Growing | 66 O Little Town of Bethlehem |
| 50 Once in Royal David's City | 67 What Child Is This |
| 51 I Am So Glad When Christmas Comes | 68 Away in a Manger |
| 52 On Christmas Night All Christians Sing | 90 The People that in Darkness Sat |
| 53 To Shepherds as They Watched by Night | 377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice |
| 54 Where Shepherds Lately Knelt | 707 Peace Came to Earth |
| 56 Gentle Mary Laid Her Child | 706 A Stable Lamp Is Lighted |

The Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Day

The readings raise us up above the cute and the trite and the trivial; for so many people that is all that Christmas is about. But there is nothing trite or trivial in what has happened today: The deepest lowliness is but the mask for the greatest glory, the glory of him who came to be our Savior!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 1:1-14	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 52:7-10	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 1:1-9	
<i>Psalm</i>	98	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, grant that the birth of your one and only Son in the flesh may set us free from our old bondage under the yoke of sin; 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. When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law. Alleluia. (Galatians 4:4,5a)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 1:1-14

Who is it that we receive in the manger of our heart this day? Not just a cute and cuddly baby! No, that lowliness of form is designed to make it possible for us to receive Light brighter than the sun, the Creator of all that is, the Eternal God, the Child who makes us God's children. As the manger and the Virgin's arms held him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, so we too recognize and receive him who has come in human flesh and blood to dwell in us through the Word and sacrament. It is in the Word and sacrament that we recognize him and receive him, the One who receives us.

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 52:7-10

How Isaiah and the believers of the Old Testament longed to see these words brought to complete fulfillment! They are fulfilled for us this day. In Advent we have watched and waited for his coming in grace to save us from judgment. And now, in the Christmas gospel, he is finally here! Shout for joy, sing with the saints and angels, even amid the ruins in life caused by sin! The one, the true, the only Redeemer and Rescuer is here! God has kept his Word! We will see his salvation in this holy Child! Hidden in the lowliness of the manger is the glory of God for our salvation.

SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 1:1-9

Don't be fooled by the lowliness. Be very glad that the Savior has come in the form and appearance of a little baby. But don't think that that is all there is to it. Oh no, by no means! His lowliness keeps us from

running away in dread and terror, for he wants us to draw near. Peer into the manger: there is he who is greater than all the angels, who is in fact their creator and the one whose praises they sing; there he is the Almighty, the Eternal God in the form for a baby; there he is the Holy One, the Only Begotten Son, who has come to conquer our wickedness and give us his holiness. Worship and adore!

HYMN OF THE DAY

33 All Praise to You, Eternal God
35 Of the Father's Love Begotten

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

2 Savior of the Nations, Come
36 A Great and Mighty Wonder
39 Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One
40 O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is
41 Let All Together Praise Our God
45 Oh, Rejoice, All Christians, Loudly
48 When Christmas Morn Is Dawning
49 Rejoice, Rejoice, This Happy Morn
55 Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful
57 Go, Tell It on the Mountain

58 See in Yonder Manger Low
61 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
62 Joy to the World
64 Let Us All with Gladsome Voice
67 What Child Is This
281 God Has Spoken by His Prophets
369 Beautiful Savior
370 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name
568 Good News of God Above
570 O Christians, Haste

First Sunday after Christmas

There are two great miracles in Christmas: the one that God has become man for us and for our salvation, and that he in grace reveals the first miracle even to me and blesses me with all its benefits.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 2:25-40	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 45:20-25	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Colossians 3:12-17	
<i>Psalm</i>	111	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, in mercy you sent your one and only Son to take upon himself our human nature. By his gracious coming deliver us from the corruption of our sin and transform us into the likeness of his glory; 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. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Alleluia. (Colossians 3:15a)

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 2:25-40

Not everyone realized who had come to the temple that day. Most just passed by a peasant couple carrying a baby. But God for reasons of his own revealed himself to Simeon and Anna. They saw that the Child who had come to the temple was in fact The Temple, God's true and everlasting dwelling place with men. And so they sang, not of their own merit or even of their faith; they sang and rejoiced that God had sent salvation to his people and had made it known to them. God has sent us salvation and revealed himself to us in the Christmas gospel; in revealing himself he gives himself and all that he is and has for us and for our salvation. Oh rejoice and sing his praises! Had he revealed himself to everyone else, I could understand that; but he has revealed and given himself to me. That I will never understand; but I will receive him and sing his praises to all who will listen.

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 45:20-25

Already those who do not know the real miracle of Christmas are putting away its tinsel and other trappings. They have passed by the peasant couple and their Child. But to us the real miracle has been revealed. To us God has made known his salvation in this little Child of Bethlehem. In him and in none other God will accomplish our salvation and the redemption of the world. When those around us say, as they do every year, "Well, I'm glad that's over for another year!" we will reply, "Oh, no! For us it just keeps getting better; for he has revealed him as our salvation and our righteousness—yes, yours too!"

SECOND LESSON: COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

The noise of the world's Christmas is passing away. The joy of our Christmas is just beginning. For God without any prompting from us or merit in us has chosen us to be the bearers of his Son in the world. Since he has chosen us to know the first miracle of Christmas, let us delight in the second one as well, in his choice of us to bear his Son before the world. As the world puts away its shallow Christmas "niceness," let us put on Christ; let us be and be seen as heirs of salvation, eager to imitate this Child who now dwells in and with us.

HYMN OF THE DAY

41 Let All Together Praise Our God
269 In Peace and Joy I Now Depart

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

6 Come, O Long-Expected Jesus
77 In His Temple Now Behold Him
78 O Light of Gentile Nations
80 Angels from the Realms of Glory
269 In Peace and Joy I Now Depart
329 Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing
366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild
456 Forth in Your Name, O Lord, I Go

467 May the Mind of Christ My Savior
490 Love in Christ Is Strong and Living
555 For All Your Saints, O Lord
577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations
608 I Fall Asleep in Jesus' Wounds
707 Peace Came to Earth
724 Voices Raised to You We Offer
760 When Peace, like a River

Second Sunday after Christmas

Why do so many people then and now miss the point of Christmas? The real Jesus reveals and gives himself only through his Word.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 7:40-43	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Micah 5:2-5a	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 2:10-18	
<i>Psalm</i>	148	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you have filled us with the new light of the Word who became flesh and lived among us. Let the light of our faith shine in all that we do; 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. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Alleluia. (Psalm 98:3b)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 7:40-43

We noted last Sunday that there are really two miracles in Christmas: that God has become man in the lowliness of the manger, and that he has made it known to me, even to me. Why not to everyone else? Because so many are more interested in their own opinions than in Jesus' revealed Word. In John 7 those who did not compare Jesus with what the Bible promised concerning him missed out on who he really was; they knew a little of that Word but were not married to it. The real Jesus, the Savior and God-man, does not give himself apart from his Word. Therefore as we begin a new year of getting to know him; let us listen ever more attentively to his Word, so that he may hold us close to himself through it. People are still divided about him. Which side of the divide are you on? How will you stay on that side from now until eternity?

FIRST LESSON: MICAH 5:2-5A

One of the chief reasons why so many people reject the truth about the real Jesus is that he is hidden in such lowliness. They want a splendid looking Jesus, noble and heroic in appearance, who will bring outward peace and prosperity, and make me always happy. But the real Jesus comes from some no-account back water town in a country despised and defeated. When he comes, he comes as a shepherd of the flock whose full glory will not be evident until he comes the second time. For now his glory is real but hidden; it is hidden under the reality that he is gathering his people by his Word. As miraculously as he gathers them, so miraculously he preserves them in faith until faith is transformed into sight at his second coming. Your recognition of him and your holding to him is a miracle too. With the passing of each Christmas that miracle is more impressive than before. Still, after so often wandering, still he shepherds me by his Word and preserves me in his fold!

SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 2:10-18

It is the scandal of the cross that ties both of the miracles of Christmas together. It is on the cross that he suffers his ultimate shame and humiliation. It is in the Word that we see it all, that we see the Eternal God in the flesh tempted, suffering, dying for those who are tempted, suffering, dying. It is by the message of the cross that he declares himself as Savior in the congregation and then creates for himself brothers who trust in him by means of that declaration. We are knit together in the fellowship of the cross. Those who reject the Word reject both of the miracles of Christmas, the miracle of salvation and the miracle of faith in the Savior. That he did it is a miracle. That we believe it is a miracle, too. By his declaration it is accomplished and he is not ashamed to call us his brothers; for that is what he has made us by his cross and by the revelation of his cross and its saving merit.

HYMN OF THE DAY

34 Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 6 Come, O Long-Expected Jesus | 270 We All Believe in One True God |
| 33 All Praise to You, Eternal God | 271 We All Believe in One True God |
| 37 Once Again My Heart Rejoices | 281 God Has Spoken by His Prophets |
| 41 Let All Together Praise Our God | 343 Christ Is the World's Light |
| 53 To Shepherds as They Watched by Night | 359 Jesus, My Great High Priest |
| 65 O Little Town of Bethlehem | 393 If Your Beloved Son, O God |
| 66 O Little Town of Bethlehem | 470 Praise to You and Adoration |
| 236 All Praise to God Who Reigns Above | 534 In the Midst of Earthly Life |
| 247 Earth and All Stars | 707 Peace Came to Earth |

Epiphany

The readings during the Epiphany season carry forward the emphasis in the readings for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the theme of Jesus revealing himself to us as God and Savior. At the same time the readings present us with a real conundrum. The conundrum is that he hides the manifestations of his deity, so that his glory remains a secret and a mystery, even while he is revealing it. All the riddles are present in the readings for the Feast of the Epiphany. The theme present in all of the Epiphany readings is: He shows his hidden glory to those he calls. You may notice that in many of the Epiphany season readings appropriation is much easier than application. There is a good reason for that: In Christmas and Epiphany our attention is on getting to know Jesus, who he is and how he works; thus there is not so much emphasis on our response beyond the response of faith, which itself is always seen as his work and not ours.

The Epiphany of Our Lord

In the readings for the feast day itself there is a manifestation of his glory in the simple fact that Jesus doesn't die yet! But who sees that this is an amazing thing? Almost no one sees the glory. But always some, just a few, do.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 2:1-12	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 60:1-6	Ruth 4:13-17
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 3:2-12	
<i>Psalm</i>	72	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, by the leading of a star you once made known to the nations your one and only Son. Guide us, also, who know him now by faith, to come at last to the perfect joy of your heavenly glory; 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. We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him. Alleluia. (Matthew 2:2b)

THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 2:1-12

The gospel lesson is full of surprises and mysteries and questions. How did the Magi know so much? Why were they not discouraged when they were met with only ignorance and fear in Jerusalem? Why didn't the priests and the scribes run with them to Bethlehem to see the fulfillment of the Scriptures? Why didn't Herod send a company of soldiers with the Magi, so that there would be no possibility of the Holy Family escaping his sword? Since the Magi knew who Jesus was, why did they leave him there? The glory of the Savior is hidden under veils and veils of mystery and still it is revealed. Mary and Joseph, poor people and virtual refugees in Bethlehem since the census, know the secret. The Magi, wise and rich, but Gentiles, know the secret. Everybody else in the story who should have known it best recognized it not at all. But look closely: the Savior has come for the poor and lowly without leaving out the wise and the rich; he has come for the Jewish descendents of David and for all the rest of us, too. Look closely: Herod and the priests and the scribes are blind to what is going on, and so they must be; for soon the Savior will have to flee for his life in the arms of his Mother and foster father. Had Herod and Jerusalem acted rationally, the whole story of redemption would have been wrecked before it even got started. Give thanks that you know the secret! That's grace!

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 60:1-6

Isaiah knew the secret too. He saw it all from a great distance away and he saw it bursting the bonds of time and space. Over the thousands of years thousands of people—a few here, a few there, but adding up to a mighty throng—would catch a glimpse of the glory that is Christ. They would come; we are in their number!

That and we would come from all over the world to the brightness of the Light of the world. Our faces shine for joy reflecting that Light. Our offerings and our prayers, precious in the sight of the Lord who possesses all and already knows all, will rise with those of saints in every age. To the unbelieving world, we are just a few not very bright or well off people outside of the mainstream. But God, Isaiah, and we see the reality and know the secret: a mighty host of the redeemed, rescued by this Jesus from the damning darkness of unbelief. He alone is my Savior, he alone is my God and Lord!

SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 3:2-12

It's all a mystery. No one can penetrate that mystery but the ones to whom God makes it known. And to whom does he want to make it known? He wants to make it known to all in these last days! And so he has preserved the message of the apostles and prophets. He has sent those who have their words to the ends of the world to make known to Jews and Gentile alike the mystery of salvation hidden in this Jesus. Perhaps you wonder if you are included; the Epiphany gospel says: yes! So too does St. Paul with all the other apostles and prophets. The very fact that you hear the message is proof of God's desire to call you by that message. It's just for you, otherwise you wouldn't have heard it. That's God's eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and by faith in his work for your salvation even you, no less than any apostle or prophet, have access to God in all freedom and confidence.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: RUTH 4:13-17

Ruth and Boaz were ancestors of Christ. Naomi by the law of the levirate became an ancestress of Christ when the child of Ruth was put in her lap. She who had lost everything now got it all back a hundred fold in the child placed in her lap. She who had lost all hope that God would keep his promises to remain her loving Savior now holds the ancestor of all hope in her lap. While we don't want to get lost in allegory, God has left none of us as widows or orphans at Christmas time. As Naomi rejoiced in receiving a child that was hers only by a law, so we rejoice to receive this Child whom God has placed in the manger of our hearts by faith. That God has done this is a secret made known in the Word and wonderful to our eyes.

HYMN OF THE DAY

79 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

80 Angels from the Realms of Glory

81 Arise and Shine in Splendor

82 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

83 As with Gladness Men of Old

84 Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun

87 Hail, O Source of Every Blessing

91 The Star Proclaims the King Is Here

92 Brightest and Best

93 Hail to the Lord's Anointed

94 O Jesus, King of Glory

254 The Day Full of Grace

279 O Word of God Incarnate

427 We Are the Lord's

461 From Eternity, O God

556 Rise, Shine, You People

569 O Christ, Our True and Only Light

574 May God Bestow on Us His Grace

577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations

735 Speak, O Lord

First Sunday after the Epiphany—The Baptism of Our Lord

During the Epiphany season we want to get to know Jesus. This Sunday we get to know him by baptism, both his and ours. But the glory is evident only to a chosen few; notice, too, that the greater the glory, the more hidden its manifestation—the glory of our life with Christ is by faith, not by sight.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 1:4-11	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 49:1-6	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Acts 16:25-34	
<i>Psalm</i>	2	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Father in heaven, at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Keep us who are baptized into Christ faithful in our calling as your children and make us heirs with him of everlasting life; 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. You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased. Alleluia. (Mark 1:11b)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 1:4-11

It's almost a secret that Jesus was baptized; it appears that no one was there to witness it except for John. But what an amazing announcement! As the lowliest of the low baptized the highest of the high, the Trinity showed itself; the Spirit covered and filled the lowly human nature of the Son, and the Father attested to his favor in all that the Son is and is about to do. But it was all a secret except to John and now to us, to whom God reveals it in his Word and in our baptism. For there, too, is a mystery and secret known only to God and to those he reveals it. In your baptism the Trinity is hidden, but really there: the Spirit covers and comes to dwell in you; the Son presents you to his Father as one for whom he did all of his work; the Father is well pleased with you because of what his Son has done for you.

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 49:1-6

On the surface the ministry that Jesus began at his baptism appears to be an exercise in futility. But just as the Father said at his baptism, God was well pleased with his Son. That work therefore would be blessed richly, even though few realize or see it. It would be richly blessed in each of those who the Father gives to the Son—the Son wins them first and gives them to the Father and then the Father gives them back to the Son as rewards for his labors to win them! When you think of your baptism, think of this joyful and reciprocal giving inside of the Trinity at your baptism and through the rest of your life with and in Christ.

Who could ever imagine such a thing! That's how much God loves us, that we should be gifts dearly won by the Son for the Father and then gifts so highly prized by the Father that he gives them to the Son! But it's all a secret, a mystery; we wouldn't have guessed it from observation or figured it with unaided reason. So God told us!

SECOND LESSON: ACTS 16:25-34

God showed his power in the earthquake. But that display of power created only dread and terror in the heart of the jailor. It was the glory embedded in the gospel, the hidden power of the gospel in Word and sacrament, that brought the jailor life and joy in the forgiveness of his sins. Notice the silly question of the jailor: *What must I do to be saved?*—as though anyone could do anything to be saved from the God who has the power displayed in the earthquake. Paul's answer is *not: This is what you must do ...* His answer is: *It has all been done; there is nothing for you to do; receive the benefit in faith and in baptism!* For believing is not a doing, as Paul makes so clear in Romans 4; it is a receiving of a wage earned by another. So, do you want to see the power of God? If you want to see it in nature, that's fine; but then be ready to tremble and quake in fear and terror. There's a better and far more blessed way: consider your baptism. The Trinity was there in grace and mercy to forgive you and receive you as a child and heir of eternal life; that display of power, so secret and mysterious, is revealed to you now and its benefits lasts forever.

HYMN OF THE DAY

88 To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord

89 To Jordan's River Came Our Lord

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

16 On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

78 O Light of Gentile Nations

91 The Star Proclaims the King Is Here

299 All Who Believe and Are Baptized

371 Oh, Love, How Deep

377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations

709 Christ, Your Footprints through the Desert

710 Jesus, Once with Sinners Numbered

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

It is in the Word that we hear the call of God that has in it the secret power of God to give what he commands. He commands: *Believe!* and the Word creates faith. He says, *Follow me!* and the Word creates the desire and the ability to follow him. That he should consider it glorious to call sinners, is that not an amazing thing? That he should attach such power to his Word that we answer the call, is that not a wonder that lasts an eternity for each of us?

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 1:43-51	
<i>First Lesson</i>	1 Samuel 3:1-10	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 6:12-20	2 Thessalonians 2:13-17
<i>Psalm</i>	67	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you gave your one and only Son to be the light of the world. Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and believed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. He said to me, "You are my servant in whom I will display my splendor." Alleluia. (Isaiah 49:3 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 1:43-51

There is always a miraculous element in the call of Jesus. For anyone looking at him on the basis of appearance or reason will say what Nathanael said and turn away. In Nathanael's case Jesus read from a distance the thoughts of Nathanael and then promised even more wondrous things; he promised that Nathanael with the eyes of faith would see heaven opened and Jesus as the ladder to heaven in fulfillment of Jacob's dream in Genesis 28. But it is all invisible to reason and to the naked eye. Nathanael was astonished by what he saw in Jesus' demonstration of omniscience, but he believed on the basis of a promise whose fulfillment was shrouded in the future and would never be visible to the human eye. Anyone who thinks that God is far and distant should consider that if he believes the gospel, it is because God is near at hand. He worked and still sustains that faith each moment by his glorious Word.

FIRST LESSON: 1 SAMUEL 3:1-10

The call of God to Samuel initially required no work on Samuel's part. But like the call in the gospel lesson it implies a following that is not going to be easy. If Nathanael and the other disciples will follow Jesus who seems like nothing to reason and to the eyes, they will all need to listen carefully to that Word. Otherwise the difficulties to come will overcome them. Thus as Mary gave us a model of submission in Advent, so

Samuel does in Epiphany: *Speak, for your servant is listening!* That remains the first and most important part of following. How many when confronted by difficulty in the Word or in life would rather say, *Listen Lord, for your servant is speaking?* But this is one of the amazing things in Jesus' call to us: It creates a willingness to say: *I don't know what is coming and what you will require of me; but whatever it is, I want to listen to you and to follow you!* If someone else asked that of you, you would call him a fool for seeking a promise to follow when you don't know the road or the cost of the journey.

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

The call is to be God's temple and dwelling place on earth. Jesus was God's temple and dwelling place on earth during his earthly ministry. And now, because he dwells in us by faith, through his presence in the Word and sacraments, that's what we have become. Such an intimacy is intimidating and a horror to the flesh. But it is an intimacy that is real. An evidence of its reality is our struggle to be the temples that we are by maintaining sexual purity. How difficult that call is in our day! How desperately we need his presence and the reminder of his presence in us, in his temples, to heed that call! Only the recalling of the price can make it so.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-17

The call to faith was glorious in grace and in the power to accomplish its intended purpose. It is the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the Word that calls and creates faith. The call remains glorious when it is translated into the life that follows faith. For that life always has its source, its inspiration, its direction, its strength to persevere in the Word. Just think of it: the Word gives us a share in the glory of Christ and the strength to remain steadfast to the end. But, again, it is all hidden except to the eyes of faith in those whom he has called (*cum affectu et effectu*).

HYMN OF THE DAY

86 The Only Son from Heaven

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

183 Holy Spirit, Light Divine

249 God of Mercy, God of Grace

283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening

367 Christ Be My Leader

453 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke

458 May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill

463 Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult

486 Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us

489 Lord, You Love the Cheerful Giver

525 The Son of God, Our Christ

529 Built on the Rock

561 Lord, Speak to Us that We May Speak

562 I Love to Tell the Story

574 May God Bestow on Us His Grace

598 My Maker, Be with Me

735 Speak, O Lord

753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us

770 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve

772 When Jesus Came From Nazareth

784 O Gracious Lord, with Love Draw Near

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Jesus shows his glory in the kind of people that he calls to serve him and in using the gospel to make them willing to follow him. This Sunday it is the second lesson that gives unity to the readings, since all of the other readings deal with specific calls to a full-time following that leaves behind secular vocations. Jesus still calls such to the holy ministry. To all however comes the call to follow him with a willingness to abandon everything should faithfulness require it; the calls in these readings bid us have a mindset that has forsaken everything, even when we are not required to do it.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 1:14-20	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jonah 3:1-5, 10	1 Kings 19:19-21
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 7:29-31	Acts 13:1-5
<i>Psalm</i>	62	37
<i>Color</i>	Green	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you sent your Son to proclaim your kingdom and to teach with authority. Anoint us with the power of your Spirit that we, too, may bring good news to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captive; 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 went throughout Galilee, teaching, preaching, and healing every disease. Alleluia. (Matthew 4:23 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 1:14-20

Notice the sharp contrast: the first verse makes all the rest of the verses seem foolish. If God could not keep John out of prison, why would anyone want to follow the one whom John proclaimed as the Messiah? The contrast is all the more striking, when we remember that those called in this reading had been disciples of John first. Why haven't they become bitter or cynical? Don't they grasp that this Jesus may well share in John's fate, and they may share in it with him? Why haven't they just given up on religion and set themselves to making the best of it in their occupation? Jesus for his part could have made, humanly speaking, better choices in his disciples than these. Ah, but there it is again: the hidden glory of the Savior is manifest in a call strong enough to overcome despair and cynicism in the ones called, and strong enough to accomplish the work of God on earth through these outwardly frail and inept workmen.

FIRST LESSON: JONAH 3:1-5, 10

God makes a habit of calling the unfit and the unworthy! He does it to magnify the power of the gospel and show that salvation can only be a gift of God, never a work of man or even a cooperative venture between God and man. No more unfit workman could there have been than Jonah. No city deserved destruction

more than Nineveh. But God called both to repentance and showed the power of his Word in giving grace to both according to his good pleasure.

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:29-31

The general call to discipleship is a call that envelopes the whole of life, not just the Sunday morning part. That God does not always require the sacrifice of everything should not dull our hearts to the reality that we should be ready to make just such a sacrifice. The call of Christ to follow him is the call to see him as our all in all; only then are we what these verses say we ought to be. It is only the glorious power of the gospel that will make it possible for us to learn the lesson. These verses contain all three uses of the law.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 1 KINGS 19:19-21

When Elisha is called to follow Elijah, God does not force him against his will. He molds his will and shapes it, so that when he goes back, it is not to lament what he is losing by following Elijah. Rather it is to offer it all up as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the coming honor of service. Elisha was not called in this instance to give up some obvious evil to follow Elijah. He sacrificed good gifts which God had given to him earlier. But at times the call to discipleship bids us make a sacrifice of things earlier given by God that were good. Whether we follow by turning our backs on evil or by giving up even good things for something better, let us do it as Elisha did, with thanksgiving, not with grouching or complaining.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ACTS 13:1-5

We do not have direct and specific calls from the Lord the way that the apostles and prophets did. Our calls to follow are those directed to all Christians in the Word of God or, in the case of called servants of the church, calls mediated from God through the church. Either call often entails work that is difficult or inconvenient. It also often means working with people very different from us. Such was the call that God sent in this reading. Like the call to Elisha and Nathanael, it was a call to a whole new kind of life and service with people very different in their backgrounds and lifestyles. What could Barnabas and Manaeen and Saul possibly have in common? Only their faith and commitment to the Word, only their common love for souls, only their zeal to follow where God had promised to send and bless them, only a glorious Savior with a glorious gospel could make such following a reality.

HYMN OF THE DAY

85 O God from God, O Light from Light

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening
 308 As Surely As I Live, God Said
 452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus
 453 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke
 463 Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult
 470 Praise to You and Adoration
 525 The Son of God, Our Christ

542 Dear Lord, to Your True Servants Give
 543 God of the Prophets
 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving
 560 I Hear the Savior Calling
 770 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve
 772 When Jesus Came From Nazareth

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Why follow him? Jesus shows his glory by his triumph over the devil. In his own day he sometimes did that openly for many to see. He still does it just as effectively but in a less public, less obvious way. Just as his victory made manifest his glory then, so it does now. Just as then, so now, everything is accomplished through his Word.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 1:21-28	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Deuteronomy 18:15-20	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 8:1-13	Hebrews 3:1-6
<i>Psalm</i>	1	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, you know that we are surrounded by many dangers and that we often stumble and fall. Strengthen us in body and mind, and bring us safely through all temptations; 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 Spirit of the Lord is on me; he has anointed me to preach good news. Alleluia. (Luke 4:18a cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 1:21-28

The devil is quiet when false doctrine is taught. But as soon as Jesus appears with the gospel, the devil is enraged and does all that he can to hinder the message. Here he does it by confessing what on the surface is the truth; but he does it with evil intent, to hinder the work of the glorious gospel. Who, after all, wants to be confessed by the devil? At the very least the confession of the demons would confuse people. But Jesus silences the devil and drives him away, while the devil in leaving demonstrates that his only power is to hurt and destroy, and only that so long as the Lord for reasons of his own permits it. That the devil is in the synagogue serves as a warning to us. Often those churches seem most united and peaceful where false doctrine is given the most room; but where the Word is preached in its truth and purity, there the devil is most busy stirring up strife in doctrine and in life, so that people will turn away from the truth. In your life, too, the devil's only power is the power to destroy and corrupt, to give pain and misery—in spite of his promise to give the opposite. But the glorious gospel's power to create is still more powerful than the horrible power of the devil to destroy. Don't cling to the one that Jesus is driving out!

FIRST LESSON: DEUTERONOMY 18:15-20

When God speaks only in the law, there is terror and dread on every hand. Therefore let us hang on every Word of the gospel of the promised greater prophet, by whose Word and work alone we are delivered from the dread wrath of God and called instead into blessed fellowship with him. Yes, and let us not tolerate

anyone who contradicts the message and the messenger that brings us to life and to life eternal. In the Old Testament the penalty for false doctrine was death; for God takes his Word seriously. In the New Testament there is no call for us to kill false prophets. But there remains the call to shun them and dread the dread effect of their words and works. God takes his Word seriously. Woe to those who do not! For they invite the devil's rule and his fate, which Jesus expels when he speaks and we listen.

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

Christ's coming has freed us from observing the Old Testament ceremonial law. But we are still obliged to follow the moral law. How do we show that we take the moral law seriously? We seek to serve our neighbor, even when that means we give up for a time some of our Christian freedoms in matters of *adiaphora*. Loving service to our neighbor is, after all, not an *adiaphoron*. Even beyond matters of *adiaphora* we therefore want to take care that we do not by our words or actions place a stumbling block to the gospel in front of our neighbor, which the devil will use to turn them from the gospel. Altogether apart from matters of *adiaphora*, the Christian who by his words or actions causes his neighbor to think that God is not serious about his Word in either the law or the gospel helps the devil harden the heart of the neighbor against the gospel. Could there be a greater harm to the conscience of our neighbor? Could there be a greater crime against the love of Christ for our neighbor? Don't find yourself hindering the Savior in his work of revealing his glory and the glory of the gospel to those around you.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 3:1-6

Jesus has shown his glory in us and to us by calling us to be God's holy house in a perishing world. That's what we are as Jesus drives out the rule of the devil from our hearts and makes of us his holy habitation. He who is worthy of greater honor than Moses has given us in the gospel greater honor than we sinners could have from the law. He has given us the holiness required for God's dwelling place by taking away the sin that polluted us and fouled the temple that God desired. Jesus was faithful to God in all that he did and thus was a fit dwelling for God; he was faithful therefore in his work of becoming our Savior and our salvation, i.e., of driving the devil out and destroying his dwelling place in us. May it then be our goal to hold fast to Jesus and to the holiness which he has won for us.

HYMN OF THE DAY

395 Seek Where You May to Find a Way
556 Rise, Shine, You People

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

82 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise	431 I Walk in Danger All the Way
111 Sweet the Moments, Rich in Blessing	437 I Trust, O Christ, in You Alone
200 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	455 Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You
201 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	459 O God, My Faithful God
333 Abide, O Dearest Jesus	475 The Man Is Ever Blest
353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness	529 Built on the Rock
402 My Faith Looks Up to Thee	735 Speak, O Lord

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Though the call to faith is general and always miraculous in its capacity to create a willing following, it is also always individual. It comes to each in his own special or unique set of circumstances. Jesus both arranges and takes those circumstances into account when he calls us to follow him. He so rules over history that he allows and then overcomes the obstacles in each of us to heeding his call. Again he shows himself glorious, but hides the glory in apparent weakness.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 1:29-39	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Job 7:1-7	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 9:16-23	Romans 8:28-30
<i>Psalm</i>	103	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you sent your one and only Son as the Word of life for our eyes to see and our ears to hear. Help us to believe what the Scriptures proclaim about him and do the things that are pleasing in your sight; 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 said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Alleluia. (John 8:12 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 1:29-39

Look at all the problems and all the obstacles to following the call of Jesus. Everybody in town seemed to have trouble or sickness or demon possession. Even the mother-in-law of Peter was down sick with a fever that prevented her from hearing the Word and from serving her divine Guest. But each and every one of the problems and hindrances was a blessing in disguise. For each one of them gave people a reason to despair of their own abilities and to seek in Jesus the compassionate and merciful Savior. Notice that Peter's mother-in-law gets the point of Jesus' help immediately: she has been saved to serve. It is very useful for us to put our own problems and hindrances to following Jesus in that kind of a perspective: trials spur us to seek his help; his help should spur us to service. Notice, too, that Jesus' eyes were always and at the same time in two directions: down to rescue and to save us in our need, and up to do it all as an act of worship and obedience to his Father. He prayed. Then he went on to proclaim the gospel and continue his work of casting out the devil.

FIRST LESSON: JOB 7:1-7

Job's experience of suffering is extreme but by no means unique. In pain his only recourse is prayer that trusts in the mercy of God and in the power of God to relieve and to rescue. The glory and the power of the

gospel are evident in the basic fact that Job prays at all; he continues to trust in God’s mercy and his promises to hear and help in the face of such terrible suffering. Even with the expectation that the only rescue will be in death, Job does not abandon his trust. The devil causes and uses misery to drive us away from God; God uses it to drive us to our knees and then with the gospel to raise us up again in hope and trust that triumphs even if the suffering stays.

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:16-23

When Jesus preached the gospel, he did so with the circumstances of those to whom he preached clearly in mind. So too the Apostle. He does not just have one pat sermon repeated endlessly and without any reference to the circumstances of his hearers. Just as God met him on the road to Damascus and then in Damascus used his special circumstances as the springboard of the saving message for Paul, so too Paul uses the special circumstances of his hearers as the springboard for God’s universal message of grace and mercy. He put himself in the shoes of Jews, of Gentiles, of those who were strong and of those who were weak; then, not changing the essence of the message in the least, he imparts the blessing that is universal for all and specific for each.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:28-30

Who are the ones who love him? Those he has called (again, *cum affectu et effectu*). All of their personal history he governs and uses to accomplish his own ultimate purpose of their sharing in his glory. Notice: Paul does not say that God pre-determines all things, but that God makes use of all things in the lives of those he has predestined. God remains God in ultimate control, without man becoming a robot in those things that are subject to man’s own control (limited though that control may be). Thus even the evil that we have and are God uses for our good: he humbles us with its consequence, and then he brings us to see the greatness of his grace in his pardon. Then alone do we begin to understand that the things we count as good are gifts of grace and not of merit. So we glorify God as he leads us from faith here to sight and glory hereafter.

HYMN OF THE DAY

93 Hail to the Lord’s Anointed

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

234 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

238 Oh, Bless the Lord, My Soul

243 Oh, Worship the King

257 My Soul, Now Bless Your Maker

312 Lord Jesus Christ, You Have Prepared

353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

357 Jesus, Lover of My Soul

363 The King of Glory Comes

371 Oh, Love, How Deep

372 I Lay My Sins on Jesus

429 What God Ordains Is Always Good

439 Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me

451 Precious Lord, Take My Hand

465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

491 O Master of the Loving Heart

520 Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old

580 Every Morning Mercies New

760 When Peace, like a River

764 There Is a Time for Everything

784 O Gracious Lord, with Love Draw Near

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

The gospel lesson is so packed with doctrine and with material for appropriation and application that it is almost painful to narrow it down. But, sticking with the theme for Epiphany, let it be this: Jesus shows the greatness of his glory in the risks he is willing to take with us. Another obvious theme is: Jesus shows his glory in the way that he answers prayers.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 1:40-45	
<i>First Lesson</i>	2 Kings 5:1-14	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 9:24-27	2 Corinthians 1:3-7
<i>Psalm</i>	32	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, in mercy receive the prayers of your people. Grant them the wisdom to know the things that please you and the grace and power always to accomplish them; 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: MARK 1:40-45

In both his rule over our history and in his answer to our prayers it is axiomatic: the greater the affliction that he permits, the greater his risk that we will fall into despair. The greater his blessings in answer to our prayers, the greater the risk that we will forget him and become arrogant. This leper has not despaired. He comes to Jesus with the perfect prayer: *If you are willing!* He trusts that Jesus is able to help and by his prayer shows trust also in Jesus' mercy. The prayer implies that Jesus might will otherwise, in which case he is ready to accept the will of the Almighty. Jesus takes the second risk when he answers the man's prayer and heals him. But now the man falls into the second peril. With no doubt the best of intentions, he prefers his own will now to the will that Jesus had expressed in his command. (One cannot help but think of 1 Samuel 15:22.) What great glory Jesus shows in his love for us! He knew what the man would do, but blessed him anyway, even when he knew that the man's disobedience would get in the way of Jesus' own will and work. What afflictions have we had that were great blessings because they drove us to our knees in trusting prayer instead of despair? How many times when he answered did we forget the Giver in the enjoyment of the gift?

FIRST LESSON: 2 KINGS 5:1-14

Naaman never would have sought the one true God, had it not been for the utter hopelessness of his condition. But notice that he too has to be purged of his pride, of his own will and reason before the Lord helps him. Naaman, like us, had reason for the rest of his life to be grateful for the greatness of his suffering!

One compelling central line in the story is: *But he had leprosy*. Again an axiom: no matter how great our accomplishments and our virtues, there is always in life a, *but he ...* Each of us has at least one thorn, one Achilles' heel that can be our undoing or that blessed curse which keeps us humble and crying to the Lord for mercy.

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

The danger of that one *but* is real. It requires serious and concentrated effort to prevent it from destroying us. The gospel is not a license for spiritual laziness but the source of the will and the strength to continue in the fight against our own special obstacle and hindrance to the gospel in our lives. What is that obstacle in yours? How are you fighting and racing so as to win over it? Jesus shows his glory by permitting the struggle and then by giving the will and the energy to overcome and win the prize which his grace and merit has won for us.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7

As Jesus shows his glory by giving us comfort and strength to endure even when he does not take the afflictions away, he does so with a second goal in mind. Not only does he keep us close to himself by such affliction, he also gives us the ability to understand, to sympathize with, and to be a source of his strength and comfort to others who suffer. Someone needs to show them the glory of the cross in suffering. Why not you? And so your affliction becomes a double blessing.

HYMN OF THE DAY

390 Salvation unto Us Has Come

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

106 Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain
 192 Triune God, Oh, Be Our Stay
 286 The Law Commands and Makes Us Know
 302 Lord, to You I Make Confession
 383 Blessed Are They, Forever Blest
 397 Just As I Am, without One Plea
 398 Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults
 404 Faith Is a Living Power from Heaven
 405 Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink

450 God, My Lord, My Strength
 453 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke
 457 Fight the Good Fight
 467 May the Mind of Christ My Savior
 491 O Master of the Loving Heart
 520 Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old
 562 I Love to Tell the Story
 739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

The readings for this Sunday put a yet finer point on the readings for last Sunday. This is his glory, that he uses all he is and has for us and for our salvation.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 2:1-12	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 43:18-25	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 1:18-22	
<i>Psalm</i>	130	40
<i>Color</i>	Green	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious Father, keep your family, the Church, always faithful to you, that we may lean on the hope of your promises and be strong in the power of your 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. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Alleluia. (Luke 6:36)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 2:1-12

It takes some time and suffering before we learn that his call encompasses all of life. The self important scribes and Pharisees who already know everything reject him. The paralyzed man saw a spiritual significance to his misery. Whether his paralysis was due to a debauched life (most of the Fathers say that this kind of paralysis was the result of a debauched life) or not, it reminded him of his sinfulness. Jesus responds to the man's real need, the one that was most on the man's mind, the need for forgiveness. That is evident in the words *Jesus saw their faith*. It is evident as well in the simple fact that the man (assuming he could speak—most of the Fathers say that the paralysis also deprived him of speech) and his friends do not protest at Jesus' words by saying: *That's not what we came for!* Notice how perfectly and beautifully this reading shows us how Christ used his omniscience and his omnipotence to demonstrate the theme of *Christus, Deus Incarnatus, pro nobis!* He uses our pain and his power totally for the good of all, also for the teachers of the law. He did not use his omniscience and omnipotence to destroy them, but proved his deity in order to call even them to repentance. An interesting footnote to the account is the love of friends who let nothing hinder them in bringing the man to Jesus, matched by the indifference of the crowd that cannot be bothered to let them through to get to Jesus. In which number do you belong?

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 43:18-25

What have you done for me lately? That's what forgetful sinners want to know from God. And this is his answer. *Go ahead! Forget all the blessings of a thousand yesterdays, if you must. What I do now is always new. In every circumstance and situation I show myself to be both God and Savior. And what thanks do I get? And how do I respond to the ingratitude, the shallow formalism, the empty worship? I show myself anew in*

every circumstance to be both God and Savior. Gasp in wonder and awe at the depth of his love and of that phrase: Christus pro nobis! He bends and uses everything to that saving purpose.

SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:18-22

Look at the glorious Christ that we have seen in Epiphany! He shows forth his glory in all that he did and said so that we would receive life in his Word an understanding of life that we could never know apart from that Word. This is his glory, that he says *Yes!* to us in the gospel; thereby he makes us his very own and keeps us as his own. Could there be a greater glory than this, that sinners are saved for time and for eternity?

HYMN OF THE DAY

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

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 11 Comfort, Comfort All My People | 332 Go, My Children, with My Blessing |
| 17 God's Own Son Most Holy | 353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness |
| 124 Savior, When in Dust to You | 354 Lamb of God, We Fall before You |
| 180 Holy Spirit, God of Love | 357 Jesus, Lover of My Soul |
| 263 All Glory Be to God on High | 372 I Lay My Sins on Jesus |
| 304 Jesus Sinners Does Receive | 391 God Loved the World So that He Gave |
| 305 From Depths of Woe I Cry to You | 519 O God of Love, O King of Peace |
| 307 Wondrous Are Your Ways, O God | 738 In Hopelessness & Near Despair |

Eighth Sunday after the Epiphany

Christianity is not just one among many religions with each religion having just a little different emphasis, but all saying basically the same thing. No, both the glory of Christ and its effect in those he calls are unique.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 2:18-22	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Hosea 2:14-16, 19, 20	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 3:1b-6	Revelation 21:1-6
<i>Psalm</i>	133-134	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and eternal God, you govern all things in heaven and on earth. In your mercy hear our prayers and grant us your peace all the days of our life; 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 steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end. Alleluia.
(Lamentations 3:22 cf. RSV)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 2:18-22

For the one whom Christ has called and made his own, there is only one real sorrow in the world, and that is to be separated from Christ or to think oneself separated from Christ in Word and sacraments. Sadness comes when we look away from him. Weeping comes when our circumstances suggest that God has moved away from us because of our sins, that he has shown himself even as my enemy. Then we no longer see his true glory or our own in the perfect robe of righteousness that he has given us to wear. We start again with a cut and paste approach to religion and make ours like everyone else's: either a religion of work/self righteousness, or a religion of smorgasbord Christianity—a little of this and a little of that, but nothing that really gets in the way of what the flesh wants to do. Christ gives us a perfect robe and joy in the new wine of the gospel; patching the old religion won't help it; mixing the new into the old will only destroy both. There is no other religion or philosophy which will bring us anywhere near to the glory of Christ and what his glorious gospel brings to us and makes of us. He is unique; what he brings us is unique.

FIRST LESSON: HOSEA 2:14-16, 19, 20

The passage, of course, finds its fulfillment in the New Testament church and its consummation in heaven. Notice how consistent the theme is with the themes sounded throughout this Epiphany season: Christ shows his glory by leading us first into the desert. There deprived of all hope and comfort, he gives everything and gives it in abundance. For he marries us, so that the shame of our harlotry is overwhelmed by the righteousness he gives and the justice he earned. That is his glory, that he gives himself, and by giving himself makes us his own, and then takes delight in our worship and praise.

What an understatement it is: His glory is unique and its effect worked by the gospel are altogether other than those of any other religion or of any thought that ever entered into the mind of man!

SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:1B-6

May the effective working of the gospel become ever more evident in our lives with one another and in the world! Then Christ's glory will be seen. The glory is double; first it is glorious in the competence the gospel gives to those who proclaim it, and then in the effect that that gospel has on many who hear it.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: REVELATION 21:1-6

This lesson is a beautiful match for the Old Testament lesson: the one shows our need and its fulfillment by the work of God in the gospel, the other shows the ultimate glory accomplished in heaven for the bride of Christ. What we now live by faith we will one day live by sight. In the gospel lessons we have seen the glory of Christ expressed in his love, even his tenderness to those who saw and heard him. We experience that love and that tenderness now by faith. We experience it in the Word and especially in the sacraments. But the time is coming when the intimacy that we knew by faith will be ours by sight. Notice how individual the expressions of God's love for us in heaven are: not one will cry, not one will mourn. And why? Because he wipes away all tears from our eyes! The picture is that of a loving father dealing with one child at a time. That's heaven! That's God's way of telling us that finally all sin will be gone and all of its consequences; Christ will not only be all in all; he will be seen to be all in all, the Alpha and Omega (i.e., the sum and substance of all truth and wisdom), the Beginning and the End (the whole point and purpose of history, both the history of the world and our own individual history). *Even so, Come Lord Jesus and let us worship you in all your glory!*

HYMN OF THE DAY

236 All Praise to God Who Reigns Above

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 10 The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us | 466 Though Thoughtless Thousands Choose |
| 79 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star | 494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds |
| 82 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise | 539 In Christ There Is No East or West |
| 85 O God from God, O Light from Light | 554 Oh, How Blest Are They |
| 134 O Bride of Christ, Rejoice | 727 There Is a Higher Throne |
| 212 Jerusalem, Thou City Fair and High | 728 Jerusalem the Golden |
| 214 Jerusalem the Golden | 729 There Is a Blessed Home |
| 215 Jerusalem, My Happy Home | 731 The King Will Come at Age's End |
| 222 Songs of Praise the Angels Sang | 773 In Unity and Peace |
| 241 Alleluia! Let Praises Ring | 776 Sing with All the Saints in Glory |
| 415 Be Still, My Soul | 780 Stay With Us |

Last Sunday after the Epiphany—The Transfiguration of Our Lord

The season of showing his glory to those he has called is coming to a close. We stand at the threshold of the season of his ultimate humiliation. But before we go down to the valley of the shadow of death, he gives us a glimpse of the glory which he hid so carefully even while he was revealing it. Lent is coming; hang on to the glory that soon will be covered in shame and washed with blood!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 9:2-9	
<i>First Lesson</i>	2 Kings 2:1-12a	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 3:12—4:2	2 Corinthians 4:3-6
<i>Psalm</i>	148	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, before the suffering and death of your one and only Son, you revealed his glory on the holy mountain. Grant that we who bear his cross on earth may behold by faith the light of his heavenly glory and so be changed into his likeness; 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. A voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him.” Alleluia. (Mark 9:7b)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 9:2-9

Life is filled with high points and low. They mirror and remind us of our spiritual life, which likewise has its high points and its low ones. For the heathen the highs and lows of life are random. For the Christian each is a preparation and an announcement of the other—Transfiguration for Lent, Lent for Easter. The Transfiguration, like all of Jesus’ demonstrations of his glory, was primarily for the benefit of those he called. It is to prepare them for the descent into the suffering of the Savior and their own suffering as well. If they can just remember! If they can just hang on to what they saw and especially to what they heard on the mountain top! Then they will not despair in Holy Week. Beyond that, there are so many other possible points of emphasis in the Transfiguration. Notice how glory that is only seen and not explained creates terror; looking up and seeing Jesus only, then hearing his voice brings peace. Notice, too, the mutually exclusive propositions: they were terrified, but wanted to stay! Moses and Elijah have come to speak with Christ of his coming Passion and no doubt of his resurrection as well—they talk of suffering and death from the unique vantage point of the eternal life they already enjoy. But it all comes together and makes sense when we see Jesus only and listen to him; that was the message in Epiphany. In very different circumstances it will be the message in Lent. That is likewise the message in your good days and days of affliction, in life

and in death. You can preach on this text every year on this Sunday for the rest of your life, and you still will not be finished with it!

FIRST LESSON: 2 KINGS 2:1-12A

Elijah was one of those who came down from heaven to speak with Jesus for the encouragement of Peter, James and John. It may be difficult to preach on the ascension of Elijah on Transfiguration Sunday. The chief reason for putting this lesson on this Sunday might be to instruct us about who it is that Jesus spoke with on the holy mountain. Elijah is the greatest preacher of repentance and Moses the greatest teacher of the Law; Jesus is the one who comes to win forgiveness for the penitent who have transgressed the law and are therefore sinners.

SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:12—4:2

In Christ's Transfiguration we see the difference between the law and the gospel, between Moses and Jesus neatly summarized. The law apart from Christ is never clear and never reaches its goal. Those looking only on the law cannot pierce the veil which hides God's primary (though not his only) intention with the law, namely to kill us, to drive us to despair, to bring us to a desperate cry for mercy. Instead those looking only at the law and not piercing its veil vainly imagine that they can keep it. Ah, but Christ comes and removes the veil; the law in his hands does indeed kill and drive to despair. But most importantly the veil is torn away from the heart of God himself in the person of Christ. On the Mountain of Transfiguration he is not veiled like Moses. In the perfect union of his divine and human natures the glorified Christ comes in lowliness to touch the disciples and take them down the mountain to the valley of his Passion. There they will see the unveiled glory of the gospel on the cross! And from the cross they will be liberated from the shackles of sin and death and hell; they will even come to share in the glory of the Savior who by his Passion takes away the slavery of sin and the ugliness of death. We will not be ashamed to preach this unveiled Christ whose lowly Word still unveils the heart of God and frees us, transforming us from sinners to saints!

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:3-6

In the preaching of the gospel the real glory of God becomes manifest. The brilliant light of his glorious face has to pierce through the veil that blinds us all by nature. The light has to penetrate the thick darkness of the god of pleasure opposed to any and all suffering. It has to work its way through the darkness of reason so blind that it judges everything according to personal advantage. It must rip away the veil that guards the heart against any intrusion of feelings that might compete with self love. The veil hides the ugliness of sin and conceals the essential misery of our existence apart from Christ. It makes it impossible to see that all truth, all joy, all life is to be found in Christ and in Christ alone. But so glorious is the face of Christ the Redeemer that it pierces through the veil and rips it away! Light shines from the darkness of his coming suffering *for us*. Light radiates from the cross even more brightly than it did from the manger or even from the Mount of Transfiguration. The light is Christ himself, a light that conquers sin and gloom and death and carries us from his cross to his empty tomb, from our cross to the day when faith will be transformed to sight. Oh, to see Jesus, to see Jesus only!

HYMN OF THE DAY

97 Down from the Mount of Glory

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

79 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star

82 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

85 O God from God, O Light from Light

86 The Only Son from Heaven

95 How Good, Lord, to Be Here

96 Oh, Wondrous Type! Oh, Vision Fair

212 Jerusalem, Thou City Fair and High

280 Thy Strong Word

350 All Praise Be Yours

369 Beautiful Savior

379 Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound

543 God of the Prophets

560 I Hear the Savior Calling

569 O Christ, Our True and Only Light

586 O Splendor of God's Glory Bright

591 O Trinity, Most Blessed Light

712 Jesus Take Us to the Mountain

771 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

783 Stay With Us, Lord, the Sun Descends

Lent

Who is Lent for? It is only for sinners!

Ash Wednesday

There are two kinds of sinners. Which one are you?

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 18:9-14	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 59:12-20	2 Samuel 12:1-13
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:2	Acts 5:1-11
<i>Psalm</i>	51a	
<i>Color</i>	Black or Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and merciful God, you never despise what you have made and always forgive those who turn to you. Create in us such new and contrite hearts that we may truly repent of our sins and obtain your full and gracious pardon; 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

Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. (Joel 2:13 cf. RSV)

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 18:9-14

There are really only two people in church on Ash Wednesday. One is quite comfortable and pleased with himself. The Pharisee is indeed a fine fellow. Would that we had more people in the church and in the world who lived as he lived. He has made good use of God's blessings. And as far as he is concerned, that proves that he deserved them. So there is no anguish over sin, no recognition of the despair which should always be ours when we look at ourselves. There is sense of his desperate need for grace and pardon that covers everything that we are and have and do—especially our good works, when we imagine that they prove our worthiness. Only confessing sinners are open to that point. The publican was really being honest; he was indeed a wretch, deserving of nothing. He was by definition and occupation: *sinner*. That's who Lent is for, *sinners*. If you don't come to Lent as a sinner, you will miss its whole point and go down to your house with the Pharisee, worse off than you were when you came.

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 59:12-20

Lent calls us to be truthful, to be honest with God, to take off the mask of outward decency and get to the bottom of who and what we are. When we do that on the basis of God's law, especially the First Commandment, we will see that our thoughts and our hearts and our desires are self serving and therefore evil and corrupt through and through. Should God look for someone to save the world, he will not look to you, and not to me either. He will have to do it himself! He will have to do it alone! He will have to do it with a zeal that stops at nothing, stops not even at our wretched and total unworthiness. And in Lent he does it. He does it for sinners. Those who recognize that fact will find in Lent the Redeemer.

SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B—6:2

Look on in wonder and in awe! These are the most holy days of the year, the only really important days in the history of the world, in your history. For what you are, God in Christ becomes! What he is you become! Nothing else matters in time or eternity. Therefore, Lent is serious in its urging and pleading from the heart of God and from the altar of sacrifice, the cross. Do not receive the grace of God in vain! It is meant for sinners, therefore just for you! It is meant for today, therefore just for you!

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 2 SAMUEL 12:1-13

One of the devil's favorite temptations for us in Lent is the temptation to make comparisons that leave us looking less needy, less desperate, less deserving of God's wrath and punishment. Then the confession of sins in private prayers and in the liturgy becomes mere rote, mere empty ritual. Of all the points that can be made in this lesson, the one that sticks out on Ash Wednesday is the ease with which David condemned his own sins in someone else. Lent is not the time for looking from side to side to find others guilty of our sins whom we condemn in order to throw off anyone's suspicion of us. Lent is not the time to look from side to side at all! It is the time to come silently and alone to look down deep inside, and then to despair. It is the time to come silently and alone to look up at the cross and see there and there alone my salvation. It is time to confess with David, "I have sinned against the LORD!" The punishment for that sin Christ will bear in Lent. Chastisement we can expect to bear, the chief but not the only purpose of which will be to bring us to the cross of Christ to find there alone our salvation.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ACTS 5:1-11

Among the great lessons that we should learn in Lent is this one: God wants us to be honest with him and with ourselves when we come into his presence. The two men in the gospel lesson are typical of those who are dishonest and honest in the presence of God. This reading makes it very clear that God is in deadly earnest in his call to repentance and honesty in his presence. Ananias and Sapphira used religion like the Pharisee as a cloak for an unrepentant heart. Would that they had cried like the publican for mercy when their sin was uncovered! Then they would have found a still merciful Redeemer. It's worth noting that their sin as far as the world is concerned seems trivial compared to outright stealing or a host of other great crimes against the second table of the law. But their sin was not trivial to God; it was the fruit and the evidence of unbelief and idolatry. (Again we see it: The sins against the second table of the law are sins first and foremost against the First Commandment.) As we enter into this holy season, let us strip away all pretense in the presence of God, make confession from the heart, and then look intently at Jesus in Lent for his mercy and our redemption. God is serious about it; the cross certainly shows that. May we likewise be serious about it.

HYMN OF THE DAY

396 In Adam We Have All Been One

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

14 Arise, O Christian People

105 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

111 Sweet the Moments, Rich in Blessing

123 Lord Jesus Christ, You Set Us Free

124 Savior, When in Dust to You
125 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
138 Oh, Perfect Life of Love
263 All Glory Be to God on High
266 Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above
268 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy
302 Lord, to You I Make Confession
303 With Broken Heart and Contrite Sigh
306 Before You, God, the Judge of All
317 O Lord, We Praise You
351 Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus

351 Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus
377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice
378 All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall
387 Drawn to the Cross
390 Salvation unto Us Has Come
401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ
412 Lord, Teach Us How to Pray Aright
534 In the Midst of Earthly Life
565 There Still Is Room
738 In Hopelessness & Near Despair
739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me

First Sunday in Lent

The call to sinners in Lent is a serious call to struggle. While we throw out and leave behind the trivial outward Roman type practices of Lent, let's not throw out repentance in the process. Let's not replace the trivial externals with something even worse: assurances that we are so forgiven that we need not bother anymore with repentance.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 1:12-15	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Genesis 22:1-18	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 8:31-39	
<i>Psalm</i>	6	3
<i>Color</i>	Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord our strength, the battle of good and evil rages within and around us, and our ancient foe tempts us with his deceptions and empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your Word, and when we fall, raise us up again and restore us 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

It is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." (Matthew 4:10b)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 1:12-15

Make no mistake about it: the life of Christ for us was along a hard and painful road. He begins his earthly ministry and his journey to the cross by a time of loneliness and struggle in the desert. So intense is the struggle that the angels attend him! That's a mystery deep and profound. What possible help could they be? Nevertheless there it is: as in Gethsemane, they do not come to lessen his struggle but to help him in some way endure it or continue in it. Given the seriousness with which he begins his journey to the cross, you can be sure that his call to repentance was not trite or cute or trivial. The good news is that he was victorious in the struggle, and that he won it *for us*. Now he calls us into his kingdom. Pass through the gate of repentance to the good news Lent announces, and then go back into the desert to struggle against the foes of the devil, the world and your own flesh with him as your strength and support and with the holy angels as your companions. The alternative? A struggle outside of the kingdom with the fallen angel/destroyer as your guide and his doom as your future.

FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 22:1-18

Or perhaps you don't think that you have all that much to repent of or struggle against. Well, then think about the First Commandment. What do you love so much that it would be impossible to willingly and gladly give up if the Lord required it? Would you give up your son? Abraham got up early and went straight ahead to obey. Would you? When God has required you to give something up, some time, some friend, some

money, some popularity, out of love and loyalty to his Word, did you do it? Did you do it gladly and willingly? If God would ask you now to give up house and home, wealth and position, all that you are and have, would you get up early and go straight to it? If he took these things away, would you complain about it? If you do not love God enough to give up your son for him, why should he give up his Son for you? But that's what he promises in the closing verses of the reading. The offspring, descended from Isaac, in whom we will really be blessed, deserves our all. We deserve nothing. How little he gets. How much he gives just to forgive the littleness of our heart's devotion. Everything is opposite and upside down of the way we would expect and the way we deserve. Do you still think you have nothing to repent of and that the struggle is easy?

SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:31-39

As beautiful as these verses are, it takes a miracle for us to believe them! That's what Lent is all about, a detailing of the otherwise unbelievable love of God in the sacrifice of his own Son for the likes of us sinners. Having given his Son, and having performed the miracle of giving us faith to believe it, how could we ever again doubt his love? Come death, come angels or demons! Let the past haunt me and the present scare me and the future terrify me! It is all nothing; the love of God in Christ leaves me at peace and secure. Lent proves that love as nothing else could. The repentance that is *always* profound sorrow over sin has its counterpart in an equal measure of confidence in the love of God for sinners. Indeed sorrow filled repentance is a joy when I know what God's response to it will be! And a repentance that is without genuine terror or real sorrow receives the proclamation of Lent and of salvation won coldly or with indifference.

This would be a good text to use if the preacher wanted to show the beauty of the liturgical introduction to confession in the worship service: it is an invitation to do something very painful, to confess, to repent; God in the liturgy encourages us to do it by the assurances of his response to our confession, a response full of grace and mercy and forgiveness. Without such an assurance we would run the other way at the call to confession, to repentance.

HYMN OF THE DAY

200 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
201 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

121 Jesus, Grant that Balm and Healing	445 Through Jesus' Blood and Merit
192 Triune God, Oh, Be Our Stay	449 Children of the Heavenly Father
202 If God Had Not Been on Our Side	450 God, My Lord, My Strength
371 Oh, Love, How Deep	455 Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You
403 I Know My Faith Is Founded	541 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide
415 Be Still, My Soul	556 Rise, Shine, You People
419 If God Himself Be for Me	714 The Lamb
423 Not in Anger, Mighty God	726 Christ, the Lord of Hosts, Unshaken
431 I Walk in Danger All the Way	749 The Love of Christ, Who Died for Me
437 I Trust, O Christ, in You Alone	752 In Christ Alone

782 Lord, Support Us All Day Long

Second Sunday in Lent

Lent has to last a while and come around every year if for no other reason than this, that it is so hard for us to get the points made so strikingly in Lent. This Sunday we see God's seriousness in Lent in this: Salvation and suffering go hand in hand, for Jesus and for us too!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 8:31-38	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Genesis 28:10-17	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 5:1-11	
<i>Psalm</i>	73	
<i>Color</i>	Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you see that we have no power to defend ourselves. Guard and keep us both outwardly and inwardly from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:8b cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 8:31-38

There it is, the stark reality: the love of God is inseparably connected to the cross, both his and ours! The price of our salvation is steep indeed! The suffering was as real as the resurrection which followed it. The cross of the Christian is likewise as real as the glory which follows it. In both cases, no cross, no crown! In Christ's case the cross is redemptive. In our case the cross is the *necessary consequence* of his redemptive work, not its cause—but nevertheless an indispensable consequence. Be careful in defining it; the cross is not all suffering. It is all suffering that comes as a result of following Jesus, e.g., persecution, the excruciating pain to self of denying self, even the struggle against both self-righteousness and despair. Our cross drives us to his cross both for forgiveness and for strength (Note the Prayer of the Day). Beware of proving Marx and Lenin right when they said that religion is the opium of the masses; the religion of the cross certainly is not that!

FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 28:10-17

Notice that Jacob's suffering is largely his own fault. Were there ever more beautiful promises given to one more obviously a sinner? God lets Jacob suffer some of the consequences of his sins. To the extent that those well deserved consequences tempt him to the even greater sin of despairing of God's mercy, to that extent his suffering is a cross. But God does not want to drive him to despair. God prevents that from happening by showing himself as gracious; he comes with grace to sinners who deserve nothing but suffering in consequence of their sins. In consequence of his sins he has nothing and humanly speaking

should expect to have nothing for the indefinite future. But look at how quickly his perspective changes when God is gracious. With the ground for a bed and a rock for a pillow he has heaven! For God is there in grace. And so, what do the details of the future matter? Suffering is certain because of sin; the merciful presence of God is also certain and that because of grace and grace alone. Not all suffering is, of course, a direct consequence of our own sin. But much is, and the suffering proves it. *Sinner* is my name; it is for me that Jesus came in Lent. My suffering reminds me of sin, the real reason for it; it reminds as well of his suffering and the real fruit of it in the redemption of this sinner.

SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 5:1-11

To the world the real meaning of Lent makes no sense at all. Only the Christian gets it, and that as a result of the miracle of faith worked by the proclamation of the gospel. And this is that miracle: Christ the holy one, Christ the innocent, suffered for man the sinner, for man the guilty. The suffering was real. So too was its result: Christ suffering for sinners and in their place makes them innocent in God's sight. Because we would never get the point or hang on to it, we suffer, too. Our suffering, whether from the purifying and purging hand of God or from his permission granted to the devil to scourge us as he scourged Job and Paul, helps us to despair of ourselves and our own strength and to live by faith in his suffering for us sinners. Reconciled we now cling to him confidently in suffering as we await the final manifestation of the glory of his resurrection. Therefore we embrace the suffering Savior and do not run away from our own suffering; both are gifts of grace for sinners who have become saints by virtue of Christ's suffering and through faith in his merit. Only a Christian can grasp that.

HYMN OF THE DAY

434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

120 What Wondrous Love Is This
 197 They Leave Their Place on High
 224 God Himself Is Present
 347 Jesus! and Shall It Ever Be
 355 Take the World, but Give Me Jesus
 366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild
 422 Jesus, Lead Us On
 428 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me
 452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus
 453 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke
 463 Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult

465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken
 466 Though Thoughtless Thousands Choose
 477 What Is the World to Me
 536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head
 585 While Yet the Morn Is Breaking
 733 Rejoice in God
 760 When Peace, like a River
 761 Christ Is With Me
 765 Day by Day
 772 When Jesus Came From Nazareth
 779 I Sing as I Arise Today

Third Sunday in Lent

Lent shows us that God is serious about *all* of his Word.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 2:13-22	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Exodus 20:1-17	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 1:22-25	Romans 8:1-10
<i>Psalm</i>	19	69
<i>Color</i>	Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, look with favor on your humble servants and stretch out the right hand of your power to defend us against all our enemies; 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

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. (John 3:14, 15)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 2:13-22

People in Jesus' day seemed to assume that because they had the temple, the Word, the sacrifices, they had a license to do whatever they pleased, even in the temple. Not much has changed, has it? But Jesus would have none of it. He is serious about his Word and about this house and what went on there. For the temple and its sacrifices were supposed to mirror what Jesus himself was: God's dwelling place on earth! Let no one think now that Jesus has lost any of his zeal for the house of the church and his sanctuary in the gospel (cf. Luther's Large Catechism, Third Commandment) which bears him and reveals him before the world. So great was his love that he gave himself to be destroyed; so great was his love that he came back in three days; so great is his love that he continues dwelling in his sanctuary of Word and sacrament to this day, and through them dwelling in us as his temples. What would he drive out of you today? The Old Testament lesson tells us.

FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 20:1-17

These are the commandments (not the suggestions or pious wishes!) of the *LORD our God*. As Luther reminds us, the word LORD really means Savior. As Savior he gives himself to us. But in doing so *he* remains God. We do not become God; he gives himself to us as Savior on *his* terms, not ours. So he saves us from our slavery in Egypt; he saves us from our running back again to slavery. But every time he saves us it is so that we can live in obedience, not in license. Notice that such obedience starts with love for God and shows itself in service to our neighbor. Love and service are never perfect, and therefore his work as Savior is our constant need. But love and service are never optional either. Thus he gave the law not because he needed our obedience, but because our neighbor needs our obedience to the law and we need his. God chooses to take

it personally if we hurt the other, whom he loves as much as he loves us. That makes God, even in the law, always the one who loves us; it makes us always what we see so plainly in Lent, sinners. Jesus came to Lent to rescue us from slavery, and he brings back again not to license, but to obedience.

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:22-25

The Jews were not really satisfied with the mirror of the Savior that they had in the temple. They wanted the repetition of the spectacular miracles of the Exodus, even though they knew that those miracles did not create a saving relationship with God. That happened only through the promise of the Savior in the Word and in bloody sacrifices that pictured his work. The Greeks wanted another Socrates or another Aristotle, even though a thousand philosophers who followed them could bring no peace to the conscience or reason for life. The salvation desperately needed by both Jews and Greeks is to be found only in submission to God's solution to our need, in the temple and wisdom of God Incarnate. We see it and receive it in the weakness of the cross and the power of the Word.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:1-10

There is a struggle of cosmic proportions going on in Lent, in the Word, in us. The law has the enormous power to kill, to enslave, to condemn and to curse. For its curses there is no cure. The flesh has no strength to free itself from condemnation nor even the desire to rid itself of the curse. That's how total our need is! Only the proclamation of *no condemnation!* because of the work of Christ can break the shackles and set us free. But if we insist on running back to slavery, slavery is what we will have. Now we have with freedom from condemnation the struggle against the flesh and its desire to reassert control. If we perceive no struggle, then either we are already in heaven, or we have given ourselves again to the control of the flesh. God is serious; we had better be!

The one preaching on this text will want to give special and careful attention to the Greek here! Note the interesting genitives in vs. 9—often pointed to as proofs for the filioque of the Nicene Creed.

HYMN OF THE DAY

456 Forth in Your Name, O Lord, I Go

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

109 When O'er My Sins I Sorrow

115 He Stood before the Court

224 God Himself Is Present

226 To Your Temple I Draw Near

285 The Ten Commandments Are the Law

286 The Law Commands and Makes Us Know

287 The Law of God Is Good and Wise

292 The Lord Is God; There Is No Other

319 On My Heart Imprint Your Image

320 On My Heart Imprint Your Image

387 Drawn to the Cross

401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ

406 This Is the Threefold Truth

530 Hark! The Church Proclaims Her Honor

531 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation

532 God Is Here! As We His People

579 Lift High the Cross

774 Church of God, Elect and Glorious

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Traditionally this Sunday was called *Laetare*, Rejoice Sunday. We rejoice in the middle of Lent that God has so fully and so perfectly taken to heart our only real need as sinners and satisfied it in Christ.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 3:14-21	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Numbers 21:4-9	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 2:4-10	
<i>Psalm</i>	38	
<i>Color</i>	Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, we confess that we deserve to be punished for our evil deeds. But we ask you graciously to cleanse us from all sin and to comfort us with your salvation; 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

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 3:14-21

How hideous that snake on the pole! It was a reminder of the pain inflicted by the snake's bite and even more a reminder of the cause of the snake's bite—sin. Now we, too, look in Lent at something initially hideous. Christ on the cross is horrible to look at since his suffering is what we deserve to suffer and a reminder of the greatness of our sin and guilt. But only at the cross do we even begin to grasp the depth also of God's love. He himself turns our eyes to that tree and gives us the balm of healing that lasts into eternity. In the Bible light is often a metaphor for truth and joy. Therefore *Laetare!* For this is the truth that brings pure joy. There is no other balm for sinners. Jesus is not just one religious leader among many. He is the only Savior and the only possible Savior. Those who seek another will feel the full fury of God for rejecting so great a salvation, so loving a Savior.

FIRST LESSON: NUMBERS 21:4-9

Even the satisfaction of our only real need by Christ in Lent does not keep people from imitating the children of Israel in the wilderness. They didn't take God's gifts seriously. They complained until he sent them something to complain about. He gave them what they deserved. Then prompted by grace alone, God provided a cure for the pain that he himself had inflicted on them in consequence of their sins. Those who looked did so because God's Word created trust in their hearts, not because looking made any sense. So too in Lent, we suffer the painful consequences of our sins even after we have seen the love and mercy of God; for we still murmur at times and complain. The first dose of medicine is suffering. The curing dose is the

suffering of Christ and the look of faith in the promise of God in the gospel. Therefore both in suffering and in relief, *Laetare!* For both are evidences of God's grace in Christ.

SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 2:4-10

Who could ever finish preaching on this text! Because of Christ's death and resurrection God sees us as already in heaven! Could anything be more opposite than being dead in transgressions, our natural state? The grace is incomparable. By definition it cannot be earned or deserved. Look to the cross and then live in the works which God has prescribed and prepared in the law, works of obedience to him and love to our neighbor. For our problem has been solved. There is nothing else for us to be concerned about than looking to the cross and living as those who are already as good as in heaven. To murmur and complain, to live as though we had yet to find peace or purpose, help or happiness, that is all as silly as it is perverse. In Christ we already have it all. Therefore, even in the middle of Lent, *Laetare!*

HYMN OF THE DAY

391 God Loved the World So that He Gave

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

107 Deep Were His Wounds

122 Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle

288 The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace

345 In the Cross of Christ I Glory

379 Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound

380 Lord, 'Tis Not that I Did Choose You

381 Grace Has a Thrilling Sound

384 By Grace I'm Saved

390 Salvation unto Us Has Come

392 Not unto Us

398 Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults

399 To God Be the Glory

401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ

423 Not in Anger, Mighty God

460 How Can I Thank You, Lord

713 In Silent Pain the Eternal Son

715 What Grace Is This!

747 There Is a Redeemer

748 Lamb of God

754 The Tree of Life

Fifth Sunday in Lent

The readings this Sunday tie Lent together with both Epiphany and Easter. In them Jesus shows his glory as a saving glory but a glory that is hidden under a blanket of suffering and a veil of humiliation.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 12:20-33	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jeremiah 31:31-34	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 5:7-9	Hebrews 5:7-10
<i>Psalm</i>	143	115
<i>Color</i>	Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Eternal God and Father, help us to remember Jesus, who obeyed your will and bore the cross for our salvation that through his anguish, pain, and death we may receive forgiveness of sins and inherit eternal life; 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

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 12:20-33

We properly distinguish between Christ's state of humiliation and his state of exaltation. But on this Sunday Jesus makes these astonishing declarations: He sees his glory as beginning with his ultimate humiliation. He has come to suffer. He has come to die. As horrible as that will be, and as deeply as he will feel it all, he looks ahead to the fruit of his Passion (traditionally one of the names for this Sunday is Passion Sunday). And what is the fruit of his Passion? That he can finally leave and be rid of us and all our foolishness and perversity? No, not at all! It is rather that by his cross he may draw us to himself! That is his glory! Can you think of anything more worthy of your attention this week? The other traditional name for this Sunday is *Judica*; it is the Sunday of judgment on which Christ is judged along with the devil and the world—all three are condemned. Christ is condemned for us that the devil may be condemned forever and lose his claim on us.

FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 31:31-34

The bottom line of the reading is indeed the bottom line. Remember that Lent is for sinners. Nothing that Jesus suffers in his Passion is because of his own guilt. God gave Israel and Judah everything, and that by grace alone. They threw it all away. So what did God do? He establishes a new covenant by forgiving wickedness (i.e., even deliberate sins, mortal sins) and remembering all the rest of their sins no more! But where is Israel and where is Judah today? Even that covenant they did not want. What about you? As Jeremiah says elsewhere, *Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?* Do not turn aside from the covenant by

which God judged and condemned his Son just for you; that comes from the heart of God and is about to flow from the sacred Five Wounds! Rather follow after him and embrace him in this new covenant in these remaining days of his Passion!

SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 5:7-9

Let no one think that the suffering of Christ was easy. It was very real indeed. His cries for deliverance were not fully answered until his resurrection on Easter Sunday when with both natures he showed himself triumphant. While enduring that suffering what did he think about? He thought about sinners; he thought about you and about me! Out of love for you, the Father did not answer his cries at once. The Son did not cut short the time of his anguish because he did not want you and me to suffer what he was suffering. By his patient endurance and humiliation he became our perfect Savior. To us the joy that Jesus expresses in the Gospel lesson and the anguish evidenced in this reading seem incongruous and mutually exclusive. But to Jesus the two are inseparably linked by the end result *our salvation!*

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 5:7-10

Thus he has become our Great High Priest. Forever and ever as our Great High Priest he holds before his Father his all sufficient sacrifice for our salvation. Forever and ever the Father accepts and is pleased with his priestly Son, and therefore on his account he is pleased with and accepts us.

HYMN OF THE DAY

110 My Song Is Love Unknown

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

100 A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth
 122 Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle
 170 Draw Us to Thee
 256 How Great Thou Art
 335 O Kingly Love, that Faithfully
 387 Drawn to the Cross

399 To God Be the Glory
 456 Forth in Your Name, O Lord, I Go
 525 The Son of God, Our Christ
 726 Christ, the Lord of Hosts, Unshaken
 741 Take and Eat

Sixth Sunday in Lent—Palm Sunday

Lent began with an almost equal focus on the sinner and the Savior. But increasingly and now in Holy Week the focus is on Christ. The readings for today want us to understand once and for all who it really is who has come to save us, so that with all confidence we may do as the Prayer for the Day suggests, follow him from Holy Week to Easter, from earth to heaven.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 11:1-10	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Zechariah 9:9, 10	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Philippians 2:5-11	
<i>Psalm</i>	24	
<i>Color</i>	Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

We praise you, O God, for the great acts of love by which you redeemed us through your Son, Jesus Christ. As he was acclaimed by those who scattered their garments and branches of palm in his path, so may we always hail him as our King and follow him with perfect confidence; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever

VERSE OF THE DAY

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (John 12:23 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 11:1-10

Who is he? He is the King of kings most lowly. Who is he? He is the King of kings who unlike any other king has come to save us. Bid him welcome and follow in his train. Throw the robes of your own righteousness under his feet, so that he may dress you with the robe of his righteousness. Wave the palm branches God made and gives, those symbols of eternal life, in salute. He delights in and receives your trust in him for eternal life, the trust that he himself has given you in his Word. Blessed is he, for he will finish what he has begun! For that reason and none other, blessed are we! Hosanna in the highest!

FIRST LESSON: ZECHARIAH 9:9, 10

Who is this Jesus who comes thus into Holy Week? He is the fulfillment of all of God's promises in the Old Testament. He is the King like none other, who comes to triumph for, not over, his subjects. He is the victorious hero who has come to take on the foes of his people and win the victory forever. He will do it all by himself without any help from his people or any cost to them! It is time in Holy Week to watch his procession through this most sacred week with growing wonder and awe and adoration! It's all for sinners! That means, it's all for you!

SECOND LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Who is it who enters into Jerusalem and Holy Week this day? This reading is the great *sedes doctrinae* for the two states of Christ in the *unio personalis*. The verses apply to the human nature assumed by the divine nature. It is in that human nature that the God-man is humbled. He starts on the bottom rung of the human ladder in the womb of the Virgin and then goes down hill from there! For sinners: humbled, then humbled, then humbled some more! And so as a reward God exalts that human nature as highly as it can be exalted and gives him the highest possible name: *Savior!* So as he rides his donkey into Holy Week we hear his name and kneel; we hear his name and confess: *Jesus is Lord, he alone and none other*. We confess it most gladly and heed the call of the apostle in the first verse of the reading: we who have everything in Christ gladly stoop to follow him in humility, in a life for others.

HYMN OF THE DAY

132 Ride On, Ride On in Majesty

133 Ride On, Ride On in Majesty

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

1 The Advent of Our King

8 Come, O Precious Ransom, Come

76 Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love

110 My Song Is Love Unknown

130 Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

131 All Glory, Laud, and Honor

134 O Bride of Christ, Rejoice

217 The Head that Once Was Crowned

230 Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now

344 At the Name of Jesus

350 All Praise Be Yours

363 The King of Glory Comes

701 Zion, at Your Shining Gates

718 No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet

733 Rejoice in God

Maundy Thursday

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 14:12-26	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Exodus 12:1-14	Exodus 12:21-30
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 10:16, 17	
<i>Psalm</i>	116	
<i>Color</i>	Purple	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus Christ, in the sacrament of Holy Communion you give us your true body and blood as a remembrance of your suffering and death on a cross. Grant us so firmly to believe your words and promise that we may always partake of this sacrament to our eternal good; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26 RSV)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 14:12-26

How perfectly this reading on this holy day sums up so much of Lent! Look at these sinners! For these he came? Yes, for these! Look at what he gives them even when he knows perfectly what they are about to do. Having no earthly property or wealth, he writes his Last Will and Testament and he bequeaths them Himself and all that he has come to win for them! He bequeaths them his true body and true blood, the price of their salvation, the promise that he will never forsake them. That's what he gives us in his Sacrament! He gives it knowing all about us. He gives it to us, to *sinners!*

FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 12:1-14

Focus especially, of course, on vs. 12-14. Today we have type and fulfillment *extraordinaire!* It's all in the gospel; it's all in the Sacrament. It's all in the promise of God in the Scriptures; it's all fulfilled in the promise of God to the individual in the Sacrament. He promises rescue from destruction and the assurance that the enemy will finally and fully be destroyed. This is the banquet of assurance that goes on from age to age and is repeated with special joy in this most holy week. For many of us this is the anniversary of our First Communion. Think back how God has kept his promise since then. Receive him still, as he receives you still in perfect fulfillment of his promise to be your Savior, your Bread of Life from heaven, your Rescue for time and for eternity.

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:16, 17

What happens here is no mere symbol. It is all as real as he is real. We eat and drink; we receive the true, essential, living body and blood of Christ in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And we

receive it together. The whole Christ has come to dwell in you. The whole Christ has come to dwell in those around you receiving him as well. Remember that when you go home with them. Remember that he lives in them, and in loving and serving them, you love and serve him. But most of all, over and over again, hold on to the reality of this meal: He is the meal and he the everlasting blessing of salvation in it!

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 12:21-30

Here is the Lamb of God, prefigured in the Passover and pointed to by St. John the Baptist. Here is the true blood of the Lamb painted no more on doorposts, but given for us to eat and to drink. Here is the ceremony that brings to mind not our sacrifices but his. Here is the commemoration that liberates us from prison by the ransom of the Lamb and saves us forever from death and damnation, from wailing now and forever. Here is the Lamb given for us and now given to us who has rescued from Egypt and from the house of bondage. In the fulfillment of the Passover, only one is struck down—not Pharaoh’s firstborn, nor ours, but the only begotten Son of God.

HYMN OF THE DAY

313 Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

Communion Hymns

135 The Death of Jesus Christ, Our Lord

136 ‘Twas on That Dark, That Doleful Night

231 Now the Silence

268 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy

317 O Lord, We Praise You

335 O Kingly Love, that Faithfully

361 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

406 This Is the Threefold Truth

717 When You Woke that Thursday Morning

Good Friday

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 19:17-30	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 52:13—53:12	Leviticus 16:11-19
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9	Hebrews 7:26-28
<i>Psalm</i>	22	
<i>Color</i>	Black	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God Most Holy, look with mercy on this your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, be given over into the hands of the wicked, and suffer death upon the cross. Keep us always faithful to him, our only Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:4)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 19:17-30

It is the day of contradiction. Everything is the opposite of what it should be. Man lives. God dies. Only John and some women stand nearby, and they are of no help at all. Instead the Sufferer takes care of his friend and his mother. Soldiers, the crowd, and officials of church and state care nothing for the Sufferer. The Sufferer dies for these who caused every bit of his suffering and who on this day made it as shameful and as painful for him as they could. We dare not look. But still, we cannot look away. We are devastated and desolate at the sight of what we have done by our sins. And a wave of relief sweeps over us. Yes, a day of contradiction: we heave a sigh of relief that he whom we love suffers thus, nor would we help him, even if we could! For he suffers instead of us! He suffers for us! He brings it all to a close, our whole salvation, the redemption of sinners, when he declares in agony and in triumph: *It is finished!*

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 52:13—53:12

It's not as though he did not know what he was in for when he came down from heaven. He knew it all. He came, not in spite of it all, but precisely because he knew what he was in for. That's how much he and his Father wanted the results of this most horrible and most holy day, this day of contradictions.

SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Here is more irony and contradiction: on this day he does not seek our pity. Instead he assures us by his suffering that he understands our suffering. For he has known our temptations and he has suffered fully the consequences of our every yielding to temptation. Now we may indeed have every confidence in him as he pleads for us in heaven on the basis of his sacrifice and suffering for us on earth on this holy day. He won mercy for us and grace. He will not fail as the source of eternal salvation. He finished his work. We have

been redeemed. Note the total irony: He was holy and suffered for our total unholiness; but still he bids us draw near! Shouldn't he be repelled or shudder that we might stain him still more? Yes, he should! But he calls us to draw near so that he can continue to cleanse us by his sacrifice and its saving merit.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: LEVITICUS 16:11-19

This is one of the greatest and most complete pictures of Good Friday in the Old Testament. Christ is priest and sacrifice. His is the blood that cleanses anything and everything that connects us to God. His is the blood that is spilled on the top of the Ark of the Covenant, containing the Law. It is the blood that hides from the sight God our transgressions of the law, and thus removes them. His is the blood on the altar of sacrifice that makes our sacrifice (Rom. 12) holy and acceptable to God. Nothing can diminish the horror of this Day of Atonement on which man is seen at his worst and God is seen at his most gracious best—*for us!*

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 7:26-28

Once and for all! The Priest and the Sacrifice are perfect! The work cannot be repeated. This very moment the Priest stands in heaven holding before his Father his once and for all perfect sacrifice of himself *for us*. This very moment, as through all ages, the Father accepts the priestly work of his Son: He accepts the sacrifice and therefore accepts us. It is a shocking day of contradiction on which everything works out for our benefit at God's expense. It is indeed *Good Friday!*

HYMN OF THE DAY

100 A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth
140 God Was There on Calvary

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

99 Oh, Come, My Soul	139 Jesus, in Your Dying Woes
105 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded	268 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy
107 Deep Were His Wounds	317 O Lord, We Praise You
111 Sweet the Moments, Rich in Blessing	319 On My Heart Imprint Your Image
113 Upon the Cross Extended	320 On My Heart Imprint Your Image
114 Christ, the Life of All the Living	359 Jesus, My Great High Priest
117 O Dearest Jesus	393 If Your Beloved Son, O God
118 O Dearest Lord, Thy Sacred Head	401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ
119 Were You There	608 I Fall Asleep in Jesus' Wounds
122 Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle	713 In Silent Pain the Eternal Son
127 Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted	714 The Lamb
128 Not All the Blood of Beasts	746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd
137 Oh, Darkest Woe	748 Lamb of God
138 Oh, Perfect Life of Love	749 The Love of Christ, Who Died for Me

The Resurrection of Our Lord—Easter Dawn

In order to avoid repetition the preacher will want to take a bit of extra care in looking ahead, so that he does not end up making perfect synonyms out of related words and then saying the same thing over and over again every Sunday in the Easter cycle. We have tried in these summaries to concentrate on the dominant fruit of Christ's resurrection in each of the readings.

His resurrection dries our tears; he has risen for the poor and lowly, the weak and the undeserving, for you and for me!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 20:1-18	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 12:1-6	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 15:51-57	
<i>Psalm</i>	30	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you made the dawn of this most holy day shine with the glory of our Lord's resurrection. Grant that we who have been raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. Alleluia. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 20:1-18

What a horrible time that must have been for the disciples of Jesus from Good Friday to Easter Sunday! Was he gone forever? Had they been mistaken in their trust? How could God let such a thing as this happen? Why would they be so tormented with such questions and doubts? Because they had not paid attention to his Word and promise. But now it is Easter! He has risen! It is time for certainty to replace doubt and for tears of joy to replace those of sadness. But wait! How does Jesus begin to remove their doubts and dry their tears? He appears first not to the disciples but to Mary Magdalene. She is to be the messenger of the resurrection to the disciples. First they should *hear and listen to the Word*; and what a word it was! Can you even begin to exhaust the gospel content of *my brothers* or of *my Father and your Father, my God and your God*? Only after that do they get to see. He wants already on Easter Sunday to get them used to relying on the Word. Notice too that it is to the least that he appears first! He has not forgotten us this Easter Day either! In the message of the gospel he comes to show himself to each of us, to the least of us. Dry whatever tears of sadness you have. He is risen for you! Cast into the empty tomb whatever doubts you have of God's love and grace. He is risen for you!

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 12:1-6

If he had not risen or if he had risen and only appeared to the disciples or to important people, I might still be sad today. Ah, but he has risen and appeared to the lowly and then to us all in the Easter Gospel. Therefore, it is a day to praise the Lord, for now his anger is passed. To trust in him is my greatest joy. To serve him in thanksgiving is my fondest ambition. To shout it to the world is my most ardent desire. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-57

His resurrection is the certainty of our own resurrection. The text is a good one for reminding the Easter worshiper of the simple, basic and yet most sublime truths that he learned in confirmation class: Christ rose. Therefore, we are certain that he is indeed the Son of God. Christ rose. Therefore, we are certain that the Father has accepted his sacrifice. Christ rose. Therefore, we are certain that we too shall rise! All three points are presented beautifully and simply in this text.

HYMN OF THE DAY

144 Christ Is Arisen

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

143 He's Risen, He's Risen

145 Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won

146 His Battle Ended There

147 Like the Golden Sun Ascending

148 The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done

149 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

151 Triumphant from the Grave

156 Awake, My Heart, with Gladness

161 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands

162 He Is Arisen! Glorious Word

163 Welcome, Happy Morning

164 Today in Triumph Christ Arose

225 This Is the Day the Lord Has Made

265 This Is the Feast of Victory

552 By All Your Saints Still Striving

719 Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia

720 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands

721 If Christ Had Not Been Raised from Death

722 Scatter the Darkness, Break the Gloom

The Resurrection of Our Lord—Easter Day

His resurrection drives away all our *fears*.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 16:1-8	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 25:6-9	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 15:19-26	
<i>Psalm</i>	118	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you conquered death and opened the gate to eternal life. Grant that we, who have been raised with him through baptism, may walk in the newness of life and ever rejoice in the hope of sharing his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be dominion and praise now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Alleluia. (Psalm 118:24 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: MARK 16:1-8

What were the women afraid of? It is interesting to note that they have triumphed over all kinds of fears at the beginning of the gospel lesson, but they are overcome by fear at its close, at least temporarily. What do we have to be afraid of? They could have feared the soldiers. We may be afraid of people who hate the church or hate us. They could have been afraid of what they did not understand. We could too, for who grasps the invisible power of God or understands death and clearly “sees” what follows it? They could have been afraid of God, calling to mind their own earlier sins and doubts. We surely can sympathize with them in that! But the empty tomb and the angel of the resurrection says to all of our fears, Don’t be afraid! He is risen, *just as he promised!* Now we can be sure that he will keep all of his promises. For if he kept this one, then nothing will be too hard for him, and nothing will hold him back from his assurance to us of his grace, his protection in life and death, his promise even of our resurrection.

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 25:6-9

What is the shroud that covers all people and the sheet that covers the nations? Is it not the futility of history and of life itself, all of which ends in death and decay for individuals, for nations, for all institutions and all they build and hold dear? Is it not the fear that the disgrace of our vain existence and the folly of our struggles for life, for honor, for this and that will all be revealed in our death? Looked at apart from Christ we fear the shroud of death. We fear it if we think it ends all, and we fear it even more if we suspect that it doesn’t end all. Ah, but now is Christ risen! Now life makes sense and so does history. Life and history come from God and he gives and uses them, so that he can prepare a banquet for us, a banquet of life eternal.

Fear is not our lot and death is not our goal! He is! As we are his, so he is ours! And in his work for us, he does not disappoint. What a day! He is risen! He is risen indeed! *This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation!*

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:19-26

If death was all that we had to look forward to, then we would be miserable indeed. We would have reason to fear that our whole life was in vain and the endurance of every struggle or temptation a wasted effort. If death ends all, why struggle, why sacrifice, why endure opposition and persecution especially from our own flesh in its fight with sins and temptations? But death does not end all. Death, feared by all, has now fallen victim to Christ in his resurrection; he has conquered it *for us!* We will rise. We will see him as he is. We will spend eternity not in dust but in adoration. That's why he came. That's why he died. That's why we are so glad on this most holy day of days. Therefore do not be afraid of life. Fear death even less. For Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! His life is our life, our death is his death, his resurrection and his heaven are our future!

HYMN OF THE DAY

- 156 Awake, My Heart, with Gladness
- 161 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 141 At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing | 160 This Joyful Eastertide |
| 142 Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain | 162 He Is Arisen! Glorious Word |
| 143 He's Risen, He's Risen | 165 O Sons and Daughters of the King |
| 146 His Battle Ended There | 225 This Is the Day the Lord Has Made |
| 150 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia | 265 This Is the Feast of Victory |
| 151 Triumphant from the Grave | 341 Crown Him with Many Crowns |
| 152 I Know that My Redeemer Lives | 719 Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia |
| 155 Christ the Lord Is Risen Again | 720 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands |
| 157 Jesus Christ Is Risen Today | 721 If Christ Had Not Been Raised from Death |
| 159 Morning Breaks upon the Tomb | 722 Scatter the Darkness, Break the Gloom |

Eastertide

The Fifty Great Days – A Week of Weeks

Acts lessons show the advance of the Gospel

Second Sunday of Easter

His resurrection gives us *peace*.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 20:19-31	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 3:12-20	Acts 26:19-29
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 John 5:1-6	1 Corinthians 15:12-22
<i>Psalm</i>	16	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O risen Lord, you came to your disciples and took away their fears with your word of peace. Come to us also by your Word and sacrament, and banish our fears with the comforting assurance of your abiding presence; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Alleluia. (John 20:29b)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 20:19-31

Jesus' Easter greeting is much more than just the Hebrew *Hello! (Shalom!)*. He does not merely wish what the word expresses; he gives it. And then he gives it again. And then he gives it to them to give to the world. What an amazing thing! He is so anxious that they get peace which they should then give. What unfit vessels they were when he called them. How unfit they still are. But that's just as well! All glory goes to Christ and the power he plants in the Word. He comes to us in Easter, with his peace. He's so anxious that we get it and get it yet again in the face of all that is in us which contradicts his peace: the warfare of our nature against his Word, the successes of the devil and the world in their assaults upon the soul, and on and on. Peace with God and peace with Jesus himself was the last thing that the disciples might have expected to hear and receive from Jesus that day. But now, the very first thing the disciples hear from the mouth of the risen Savior is: *Peace!* That's even his message to Thomas and now with an exclamation point behind it to us who have not seen but by the power of the Word have nevertheless believed.

FIRST LESSON: ACTS 3:12-20

The theme of sin as war against God is easily carried out if one is preaching on this text. Look at how utterly depraved such a war, such a rebellion is—waged against the only Righteous One. Look at how utterly sinful is war waged against the only Holy One. Look at how utterly foolish is war waged against the Author of Life, against God himself. That's always what sin is. But look at how it all turns out in the death and resurrection of Christ *for us!* One almost has to laugh for joy at the way that God turns everything upside down in order to rescue and save us from ourselves and give us peace, just as he promised!

SECOND LESSON: 1 JOHN 5:1-6

Now that we have peace because of Christ's death and resurrection our whole attitude towards the law of love changes. We *want* to love those he loves, not to gain his love but precisely because we have it already. At peace him, we are as well at peace with ourselves and replace the striving to be first in being served with a striving to be first in loving service. Of course, in this life that is never perfect and never finished; but fed by his sacraments and supported by his Spirit we press forward in peace with him and in service to one another.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ACTS 26:19-29

Paul looks like such a loser. He is in chains. His prospects of accomplishing anything in this appearance before the high and mighty are slim and none. Nevertheless the reality is altogether other than appearances. Paul is the one who has everything in the message he has brought; the high and mighty have nothing. In fact what they appear to have gets in the way of what they could have, peace with God through the light made known in the resurrection of Christ. But how sad! They think themselves too clever, too powerful, to bow before the Crucified. His peace and his peace ambassador make no sense to them, and they reject both. May none of us make that tragic and damning mistake! Peace is God's to give in the work and message of Paul; warfare against God is however still in the power of man. Your peace is not in your outward beauty or strength or possessions or health or anything else; They are indeed as gifts of God, but not substitutes for peace with God.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-22

People think that the cemetery is peaceful. Apart from Christ's resurrection the cemetery is anything but peaceful. It is the testimony of our utter defeat in the war against God that sums up life apart from Christ. Ah, but with the message of Christ in the gospel lesson, the cemetery can indeed be what we called it in German: *Friedhof* and *Gottes Acre*. Those who died in Christ already have the enjoyment in heaven of that peace which passes all understanding. No resurrection of Christ means no peace with God in this life and no gospel or blessed resurrection for us in the life to come. Ah, but Christ is risen! Peace is ours through all eternity!

HYMN OF THE DAY

165 O Sons and Daughters of the King

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

29 Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending
 78 O Light of Gentile Nations
 142 Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain
 145 Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won
 160 This Joyful Eastertide
 211 I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name
 308 As Surely As I Live, God Said
 341 Crown Him with Many Crowns

386 Now I Have Found the Firm Foundation
 434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart
 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving
 577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations
 608 I Fall Asleep in Jesus' Wounds
 704 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending
 756 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight

Third Sunday of Easter

The blessings of Easter are all ours through the Word, the effective means of grace!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 24:36-49	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 4:8-12	Acts 12:1-19
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 John 1:1—2:2	2 Corinthians 2:12—3:6
<i>Psalm</i>	118	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world from the despair of death. By his resurrection to life, grant your faithful people gladness of heart and the hope of eternal joys; through your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. Our hearts were burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us. Alleluia. (Luke 24:32 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 24:36-39

From Easter Sunday until the Ascension Jesus emphasized in his discourses with the disciples the absolute necessity of the Word. Soon he would remove his visible presence. In this appearance he moves from the visible to the Word. He uses what they can see and touch as the bridge to the Word. The closer they are to his Word, the closer they will be to him. For everything that he is and did is enclosed in the Word. In revealing himself in the Word, he gives himself and all that he has to them. So that he may be with them and they with him, he performs the miracle, a miracle which the Holy Spirit will soon perform regularly (Don't forget: *Opera ad extram sunt indivisa*). He opens the Scriptures so that they finally understand; without that miracle of the effective Word all remains darkness and foolishness. For how impossible everything he promised appears to reason! But with the effective Word, it all becomes both clear and powerful even beyond the creation of faith. Look at what Jesus sends them to do!

FIRST LESSON: ACTS 4:8-12

Just like Jesus in the gospel lesson Peter goes straight from the visible to the Word and from the outward but unseen manifestation of Christ's power in his resurrection to its inner power in the law which kills and condemns and the gospel which miraculously brings faith and life, forgiveness and salvation. The miracles of the Word are far greater and more long lasting than the visible miracles are. The greatest miracle of the Word is that it creates faith in the message that salvation is by faith in the all sufficient merit of the crucified and risen Christ.

SECOND LESSON: 1 JOHN 1:1—2:2

Everything which the apostles had seen and heard is there to be received, shared, enjoyed in the Word. The Word brings the light. In darkness there can be no fellowship. You can't walk hand in hand, work with or support, lovingly serve what is lost in the dark. But the Word brings God to light. It shows and brings the Advocate who pleads our case so effectively to light. It brings the truth to light that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. Sin removed is darkness removed. The light of the Word removes the sin by revealing the Advocate which brings forth trust in him and in his merit.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ACTS 12:1-19

This is the same Peter who swore with an oath that he did not know Jesus so that he would avoid prison or worse. Look at him now! The resurrection of Christ and his abiding presence in the gospel has made a new man out of Peter. In prison Peter is calm and ready for whatever the Lord of history has in mind for him. This time what he has in mind is release. For the risen Christ rules history for the benefit of the Church; whatever serves the best interest of his people, that is what he permits, that is what he sends. This time—not every time—it is Peter's release, so that he can strengthen those who have heard the Word by the Word. Then unafraid of what the future holds because the Word has strengthened him too, Peter goes elsewhere to proclaim it. So what might you fear? Hold fast to the Word and the risen and ruling Christ in it. Come prison, come death, come what may, he is risen and rules. He will not forsake you but remains with you through his Word. He will continue to rule so that you come to be where he is.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:12—3:6

The Roman generals and emperors came back from wars and led a triumphal procession through the streets of Rome with treasures of every kind: captured slaves or foreign rulers, exotic animals and gold and silver all on display, and the sweet smell of incense for the sacrifice of thanksgiving in the temples of their gods. The apostles together with all those who proclaim the gospel look like the defeated. They have so many problems, set backs, and trials. But here they are with the gospel leading a triumphal procession through history. The coming of that gospel always has an effect. In some it is sweet perfumed incense to those brought to life by the message. For others, through their own fault, it is stench of death and damnation because they reject the message and its saving benefit. Where are you in that procession? The Word of God and its gifts are visible to your family, your friends, your co-workers, and the world only through the procession of those who hold to it and live it. Are you drawn and drawing by the sweet incense of the gospel? Are you repulsive and repelling by your disgracing of the gospel by a life that contradicts it?

HYMN OF THE DAY

160 This Joyful Eastertide

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

76 Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love

142 Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain

145 Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won

225 This Is the Day the Lord Has Made

281 God Has Spoken by His Prophets

288 The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace

351 Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus

358 How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

371 Oh, Love, How Deep

398 Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults

528 Christ Is Our Cornerstone

531 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation

561 Lord, Speak to Us that We May Speak

567 Awake, O Spirit, Who Inspired

571 From Greenland's Icy Mountains

771 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

Fourth Sunday of Easter

The readings with this Sunday begin a gradual transition from the Half Year of Our Lord to the Half Year of the Church, from the way that God won our salvation to the way we live our salvation. From now until Pentecost they focus on the nature of our relationship with the Risen Christ through his Word: the relationships of Shepherd and sheep, of Vine and branches, of Friend with friends, of Patron and protected.

The Risen Christ is our Good Shepherd.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 10:11-18	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 4:23-33	Acts 20:28-32
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 John 3:1, 2	1 Peter 5:1-4
<i>Psalm</i>	23	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Good Shepherd who laid down your life for the sheep. Lead us now to the still waters of your life-giving Word that we may abide in your Father's house forevermore; for you live and reign with him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Alleluia. (John 10:14)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 10:11-18

The whole work of Jesus from Christmas to Easter had this in mind, that he should be and remain our Good Shepherd and we should be and remain his sheep. All in all, it's a bad bargain for the shepherd! The hired hand acts rationally. He is worth more intrinsically and certainly to himself than a hundred sheep and shouldn't die for any of them. In the case of Jesus that is true a thousand fold. But look what happens! Everything is upside down and backwards. He for whom the whole of creation exists freely and willingly sacrifices himself for the sheep who add nothing to his own infinite worth. The Father even agrees with that sacrifice. He loves the sheep, it would seem, even more than he loves the Shepherd! For it is his will that the Shepherd become the Good Shepherd in just this way. So much they love the flock! You would have to be a stone not to be moved by such love *for you!* Listen to his voice! It gives the life that he laid down and has now taken up again.

FIRST LESSON: ACTS 4:23-33

The Good Shepherd never leaves or forsakes us even when persecution, trials, and pain make it appear that he has left us. Kings and nations may rage against him. They only seem to win, just as they only seemed to win when Jesus died. The reality is that he lives and reigns, whether or not we see it or feel it in the way that

people did in this reading. We pray *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done!* And then we submit to his Spirit in the Word. The only alternative is to rage with the heathen and then to perish with them as well. For the Good Shepherd keeps his flock through life, to the gates of death, and then beyond. But all against him and his kingdom will be destroyed (as the rest of the quoted Psalm declares).

SECOND LESSON: 1 JOHN 3:1, 2

The Bible is rich in the variety of ways that it finds to express the intimacy of the relationship that exists between the believer and God. Each word depicting the relationship intensifies the other words. So in this reading the relationship of Shepherd and sheep is taken from the realm of man and animal and raised to the level of family, of Father protecting children. Children are often unaware of that protection. It is nonetheless real. In God's case that is true on a much higher plane and with end results that we will only appreciate in heaven.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ACTS 20:28-32

The reading beautifully expands and applies the thoughts of the gospel lesson. It is the Word of grace that brings us into the sheepfold of Christ and preserves us there to life eternal. But we need to be on guard against those who would turn us aside from the Word of grace. The whole history of the Church and the modern religious scene give ample witness to this always relevant exhortation of the inspired apostle. In Advent we saw the Holy Office of the Ministry exalted and typified in the work of St. John the Baptist. Here that office again achieves prominence as the office which mirrors Christ's prophetic office. The title *pastor* is a constant reminder both to us and also to our members of the nature of the office and of the relationship that should exist between shepherd and flock.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 5:1-4

The shepherds should remember and follow the example of The Shepherd. The flock should value highly the love of God for the flock that he sends them such shepherds. If the reward for faithful shepherds is so great, then the love of The Shepherd for his *under* shepherds must also be very great. The shepherds should be encouraged by the promise and the flock should be both warned and comforted by that same promise. Just remember too: The glory is certain but it is promised for the future, not for the moment. Present glory is temporary; only that to come remains forever. Don't be impatient. Be faithful!

HYMN OF THE DAY

375 The King of Love My Shepherd Is

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

150 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia!

214 Jerusalem the Golden

219 Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See

263 All Glory Be to God on High

360 The Lord's My Shepherd; I'll Not Want

374 My Shepherd Will Supply My Need

396 In Adam We Have All Been One

426 Yours Forever, God of Love

432 I Am Jesus' Little Lamb

434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart

436 Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep

494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds

508 Gracious Savior, Gentle Shepherd
515 Shepherd of Tender Youth
538 The Church's One Foundation
545 Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit
548 O Lord, in Prayer You Spent the Night

728 Jerusalem the Golden
750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate
756 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight
766 The Lord's My Shepherd
771 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

Fifth Sunday of Easter

The intimate connection to our risen Lord wrought by the gospel means of grace has rich consequences for our life with him even now.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 15:1-8	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 8:26-40	Acts 16:11-15
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 John 3:18-24	
<i>Psalm</i>	67	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you form the minds of your faithful people into a single will. Make us love what you command and desire what you promise, that among the many changes of this world, our hearts may ever yearn for the lasting joys of 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. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. I am the way, the truth, and the life, says the Lord. Alleluia. (John 14:6 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 15:1-8

Could the relationship be a closer one? There has to be a certain correspondence between the two parts, the vine and the branches. That correspondence is accomplished by the gospel that make us branches pure like the vine. Now the fruit from the good vine can be good fruit, pure because of its source in the vine. The rotten and the corrupt is pruned away. The process that may indeed be painful, but it is a process that is necessary. We might note in passing that it takes a while to determine that a branch is really dead and will never bear fruit; the Lord who sees everything is patient; we who see little need to be patient too. The branches pruned once were alive, once were connected to the vine. How tragic that they *have chosen* to die! Look for fruit that proves there is life in the branch. What is the fruit? It is a life that delights to receive all its strength from the vine. The Confessions often define the best worship of God as that worship which delights in receiving everything from him. Luther's chief complaint against the monks was that they did not want to receive anything from God without earning it first. Then it is the life we live with our family, at work and school, in service done as precious and good fruit that please him. It is the life of stewardship of all the energy and impulse that comes from the vine. What in you can you now appreciate as fruit that comes from him, even unconsciously? It all brings glory to his Father and is therefore precious to him. Your life therefore has infinite value, no matter how insignificant or lowly it may seem to you and to the world.

FIRST LESSON: ACTS 8:26-40

Here are a couple of really excellent fruits from the connection of the branch to the vine. This Phillip was not one of the apostles; he was a dedicated layman, a deacon whom the Lord used in the spreading of the gospel. How did that come about? First and foremost Phillip loved the Scriptures. He knew them well. He thought about them and delighted in the Old Testament pictures of his Savior. Knowing the Scriptures and loving them was a fruit that in its turn and at the time of God's own choosing bore still more fruit: he had the honor of sharing his love of the Scriptures and of his Lord with a total stranger. Who knows what use God may put to the Word that we have come to know and love? He is delighted by our use of the Word through which he lives in us and gives us everything he has. He will find ways for us to produce fruit in season, with family, with friends and members of our church, with strangers, too, as he arranges the opportunity for us to give the reason for the hope and the joy which is ours in Christ the pure vine.

SECOND LESSON: 1 JOHN 3:18-24

Here is more fruit whose source is in the vine: an awareness that Christ is alive in us by his Word and when our conscience wants to drive us to despair he is there to assure us of our forgiveness. That assurance is renewed week in and week out as we hear his Word. Then there comes bursting forth the fruit of love. That love is not mere sentiment; it is in the will, not the emotion. It is love that is determined to seek the best interests of those around us, even those who may hate us or not appreciate our eagerness to be of service. Some of the grapes have to be crushed in order to make wine.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ACTS 16:11-15

Here is another fruit that comes from the vine. Lydia was eager to serve those who served her with the gospel. The work that we do at church in assisting our pastors is no small thing. Lydia's service made it possible for Paul to devote more of his time to the mission that God had given him in Philippi. Moreover her hospitality was a good confession of her faith to her neighbors. It told them that her love of the Word was not just a Sunday morning affair. No one told Lydia to do what she did. She looked for ways to be of service and found them. God treasures the service of those who serve the servants, e.g., elders, deacons, ushers, secretaries, Ladies' Aid. So should we! Too often we think that we are the cogs that matter and disdain those who grease the wheels to make it all possible.

HYMN OF THE DAY

168 With High Delight Let Us Unite

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

79 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star
 141 At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing
 249 God of Mercy, God of Grace
 283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening
 301 We Praise You, Lord
 342 Amid the World's Bleak Wilderness
 385 Chief of Sinners Though I Be

497 This Is My Will
 505 Love Is the Gracious Gift
 571 From Greenland's Icy Mountains
 574 May God Bestow on Us His Grace
 614 Sing to the Lord of Harvest
 750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate
 761 Christ Is With Me

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Christ *for us* aims at visible results that show the life of Christ *in us*.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 15:9-17	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 11:19-26	Acts 9:36-42
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 John 4:1-11	
<i>Psalm</i>	98	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Father of lights, every good and perfect gift comes from you. Inspire us to think those things that are true and long for those things that are good, that we may always make our petitions according to your gracious will; 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. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. 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 cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 15:9-17

The Feast of the Ascension is right around the corner. With Christ's visible presence removed, how will the world see him? It should see him when it sees us. That we would strive to reflect in our lives the love of Christ and his obedience to his Father for us is not optional for the Christian. The branches, to connect with last week's gospel lesson, bear corresponding fruit of necessity. To spur us on Jesus gives us a new title; he calls us his friends, those with whom he has shared the heart and mind of God! (Aristotle brilliantly describes what that word *friend* means in his *Nicomachean Ethics*; if you have time to read that chapter, it will be time well spent even as you think through these verses.) Friends share common interests. They have a certain equality even. Their goals are similar or the same. Their likes and dislikes are alike. That Jesus has been our friend has no greater proof than in what he did for us on the cross. Now we get to look like his friends by the way we are with one another. Love each other!

FIRST LESSON: ACTS 11:19-26

Friends of Jesus: that what we see here. So obviously were these members in Antioch friends of Jesus that it was in Antioch that they were first called *Christians*. Is that so obvious with you? It was obvious to the people of Antioch because of their open devotion to the message of Jesus' life and death and resurrection for them. It was obvious by their desire always to learn more so as to bring their lives with one another more and more into conformity with the love of Jesus for them. It was obvious in their eagerness to work with one another and in union with the church for the spread of the gospel. All of that was visible evidence

of friendship with Jesus, evidence of the grace of God rooted in the message of Christ for us, evidence that served for mutual encouragement and then for outreach as well. Zeal for knowledge of the Word yields the good fruit of zeal for a life that conforms to that Word.

SECOND LESSON: 1 JOHN 4:1-11

For the fruits to be good their source has to be appropriate. That's why we have what to others may seem a mania for pure doctrine. The love and the works of love must come from union with Christ and from nourishment that Christ gives in his Word. Anything that looks like love but does not have Christ and his Word as the source is plastic fruit, not the real thing, no matter how real it may look on the outside. Real love in God's eyes (as distinguished from the world's eyes) is in accord with the truth of God's Word. No matter how noble or beneficial or heroic the acts of one only in the world are, they are not the same thing as the works of the Christian motivated by the love and work of Christ. Love one another as Christ has loved. Love one another and know the difference between Christ-like love and the love of the world.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ACTS 9:36-42

If you preached on the supplemental lection last Sunday, this reading easily serves as a follow-up text. Peter hurried to help a servant of servants. He was not too busy or too important. He did not feel himself "put upon." Tabitha, for her part, could not preach and did not teach. Tabitha just helped those she could as best she could. She didn't look for a great reward. She quietly went about her business using the talents and other gifts that God had given her to show her love to Christ in loving service to those who could not repay her. When she died, those who mourned were the evidence of her faithful loving service. When she was raised from the dead, we have no record that she entered a convent. She doubtless continued as before. But the seed planted by her works the first time around now blossomed and bore fruit when the hidden power of her faith became evident at the miracle of her rising. We can imitate her first works; it would be a good funeral for any of us indeed if our funeral would be like hers almost was.

HYMN OF THE DAY

377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

79 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star
 245 Sing a New Song to the Lord
 247 Earth and All Stars
 317 O Lord, We Praise You
 342 Amid the World's Bleak Wilderness
 380 Lord, 'Tis Not that I Did Choose You
 411 What a Friend We Have in Jesus
 458 May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill
 490 Love in Christ Is Strong and Living
 491 O Master of the Loving Heart
 492 Son of God, Eternal Savior

497 This Is My Will
 499 O God of Mercy, God of Might
 505 Love Is the Gracious Gift
 521 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace
 524 O Fount of Good, for All Your Love
 530 Hark! The Church Proclaims Her Honor
 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving
 749 The Love of Christ, Who Died for Me
 761 Christ Is With Me

The Ascension of Our Lord

This feast day has everything in it – Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, the Ascension itself, the anticipation of Pentecost and the whole of Half Year of the Church. It's Ascension Day! Aren't you happy for him? He has triumphed and entered into his glory by keeping all of his Word! His triumph today guarantees that he will always keep his Word. Aren't you happy for yourself, too?

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 24:44-53	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 1:1-11	Deuteronomy 33:26-29
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 1:16-23	Ephesians 4:7-16
<i>Psalm</i>	47	110
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus, King of glory, on this day you ascended far above the heavens and at God's right hand you rule the nations. Leave us not alone, we pray, but grant us the Spirit of truth that at your command and by your power we may be your witnesses in all the world; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. Surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age. Alleluia. (Matthew 28:20b cf. NIV)

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 24:44-53

Here we have what Luther said so often: God would never lie to us! No better proof is there than the parting words of Jesus. We might have expected the disciples to be sad. But with the confirmation of all of the Scriptures and the assurance that he would always be with them in his Word how could they help but rejoice and be glad. He has triumphed. He did it all in the lowly human nature, now fully exalted. And he did it all for us! His triumph therefore is our triumph. It is ours to share in the preaching of repentance and forgiveness. We have him still in that message that saves because he kept his next promise to send and to keep on sending the Spirit with the power to convert and keep us until he comes again.

FIRST LESSON: ACTS 1:1-11

We will see him again and go to be where he is. That's how much he loves us! Again, it's amazing: One might have expected that he would go and consider himself well rid of us and rid of our silly and irrelevant questions. But no, it's just the opposite: He goes so that he can be with us always; he goes so that he come again and take us to share in his glory! When will he come and restore the kingdom? When the time is best! We are happy to leave it to him and to be busy with the work he has given us to do while we wait. We might note in passing that he tells very little of what we will experience when we join him there. He doesn't want

us to focus on that just yet, but on his Word and on what he wants us to do while we wait. It is enough that we know that we will be with him. What a great feast day, one of the best of the whole year!

SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 1:16-23

Again, aren't you happy for him? He has gone with both natures to be King of kings and Lord of lords. And then there is this: He did what he did on earth for us; he does what he does now also for us, his mystical body on earth. And he does it not far away; he does it filling all things, and that according to both natures. He could not be closer than he is. And you can believe his Word. He has proven on the cross that God would not lie to you, as Luther loved to say.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: DEUTERONOMY 33:26-29

Where is there a god like our God, who does such wondrous and mighty things, and all of it for our benefit? The gods of pleasure disappoint and go away. The gods of gold and silver are used up, are stolen and otherwise disappear. The god of self is always helpless and alone. But this is our God, the God who saves, the God who endures all and triumphs for us and for our salvation. May he remain our God forever and ever! May his Word keep bringing him to us and us to him that we may enjoy the blessings here described and promised, blessings granted even now (whether we see it or not), blessings yet to be fully enjoyed when he keeps his final promise and takes us to heaven.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 4:7-16

This reading can serve as a bridge to what is coming in the second half of the year. Christ by his life and death, by his resurrection and ascension, has won for himself a Church. All of its members alike have been redeemed from sin and death and hell. To each he has given gifts in addition to the gifts of salvation in Word and sacraments common to all believers. The gifts to each individually are intended as gifts for the benefit of all collectively. By those gifts administered according to his Word each and all are served by Christ himself, who in love has so generously distributed his gifts as a great and generous King to subjects he has loved to death and beyond. Let us then cling to him in his Word that we may grow in him and in his grace to bring forth fruit in our hearts and in our lives of mutual service.

HYMN OF THE DAY

341 Crown Him with Many Crowns

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

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|--|---|
| 169 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus | 349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure |
| 171 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing | 352 Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor |
| 172 Up through Endless Ranks of Angels | 371 Oh, Love, How Deep |
| 173 On Christ's Ascension I Now Build | 377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice |
| 174 See, the Conqueror Mounts in Triumph | 449 Children of the Heavenly Father |
| 175 Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise | 518 Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go |
| 180 Holy Spirit, God of Love | 536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head |
| 291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word | 545 Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit |

546 Lord Jesus, You Have Come
557 On Galilee's High Mountain
558 Christ High-Ascended

561 Lord, Speak to Us that We May Speak
568 Good News of God Above

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Jesus prayed for us the night before he died. He prays for us still in heaven, and God has answered his prayer.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 17:11b-19	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 1:15-26	Acts 7:54-60
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 John 4:13-21	Hebrews 7:11-27
<i>Psalm</i>	8	124
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, your Son our Savior was taken up in glory and intercedes for us at your right hand. Through your living and abiding Word, give us hearts to know him and faith to follow where he has gone; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Alleluia. (John 14:18)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 17:11B-19

The Prayer for the Day beautifully sums up the essence of the gospel lesson. Jesus has removed his visible presence from us, but he has not removed his effective presence from us. He, together with all of his gifts—for he can never be separated either from his Word or its effects—is fully present in the message of the gospel. He effectively and eternally prays for us in heaven, and then in the Word gives us himself and the gifts he has won for us, i.e., he prays for us and gives us what he prays for. Through his Word he preserves us in faith until he takes us out of the world to himself in heaven. He sends us out into the world to give his saving gifts to all those he has chosen to gather to himself by his Word.

Christ's High Priestly Prayer perhaps more clearly than any other single section of the Word shows us the three essential components of faith: knowledge of the basic facts of our salvation, assent that these facts are true, i.e., that they correspond to history and reality, confidence that these facts apply even to me.

FIRST LESSON: ACTS 1:15-26

Do you want proof that the Father answers Jesus' prayer? You need look no further than to the days shortly after his ascension. In spite of the utter wickedness of Judas, the devil's plans to destroy not only Jesus but with him the possibility of faith have been defeated. Judas is dead and has gone to the place he chose for himself. But the apostolic band remains and the ascended Lord provided for a suitable replacement for Judas. Still today the devil rages, but he rages in vain. The prayer of Christ is answered as the gospel is proclaimed from generation to generation by an unbroken succession of pastors and teachers sent out by the ascended Savior. By that proclamation in Word and sacraments the church is preserved and extended when and where it pleases him.

SECOND LESSON: 1 JOHN 4:13-21

If you have been preaching on the Easter epistle lessons, this one is a good addition and summation of the epistle lessons for the past several weeks. At the same time this reading looks ahead to Pentecost. Christ lives in us and we in him. No closer connection is possible and it is therefore incomparable. All human connections pale in comparison. The difficulty is that we do not perceive his presence; we are blinded by our flesh, seduced by the devil, distracted by the world, so that we do not yet have perfect love that casts out fear nor perfect love like his for our brothers. The solution to the difficulty? The Word, and then the Word, and then the Word. It is only from his presence in the Word and sacraments that we grow in our awareness of his love and life in us, and then in our love and life for one another. That's what he prayed for in today's gospel lesson; that's what he still prays for and then gives us through his Word in answer to his own prayer and ours too.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ACTS 7:54-60

Here is a beautiful testimony to the truth that he has not left us as orphans. According to both natures the exalted Christ is fully aware of our need and meets it, even in suffering and death! Stephen understood that. He isn't complaining about his suffering. He is ready to receive it and through it to enter into eternal joy. It is also a testimony to the truth that he is ever present with his gospel to create a faith that can withstand the hatred of the world and even torture that ends in murder; so powerful is that faith that it even imitates the prayer of Christ himself on the cross when faced with death.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 7:11-27

The lesson carries forward the gospel lesson. Jesus only began his high priestly prayer the night before he died. Now, in heaven, with the work of his priestly sacrifice perfect and complete, the priestly work of intercession for us goes on and on and on. He merits a favorable hearing for us by virtue of his redeeming work. He prays with an understanding of our every need. He does so to give us all boldness and confidence in our own prayers since they are offered through him and with him, and answered on account of him and in accord with the perfect will of love that he bears toward us always.

HYMN OF THE DAY

359 Jesus, My Great High Priest

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

152 I Know that My Redeemer Lives
 172 Up through Endless Ranks of Angels
 173 On Christ's Ascension I Now Build
 175 Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise
 192 Triune God, Oh, Be Our Stay
 202 If God Had Not Been on Our Side
 205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven
 309 Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord
 318 Sent Forth by God's Blessing

359 Jesus, My Great High Priest
 380 Lord, 'Tis Not that I Did Choose You
 411 What a Friend We Have in Jesus
 413 When in the Hour of Utmost Need
 505 Love Is the Gracious Gift
 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving
 604 O Love that Casts Out Fear
 740 Draw Near

The Coming of the Holy Spirit—The Day of Pentecost

Though he has withdrawn his visible presence, Jesus is closer to us than ever. Therefore, whatever the future holds, we will not fear!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 14:25-27	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Ezekiel 37:1-14	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Acts 2:1-21	
<i>Psalm</i>	51b	
<i>Color</i>	Red	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy Spirit, God and Lord, come to us this joyful day with your sevenfold gift of grace. Rekindle in our hearts the holy fire of your love that in a true and living faith we may tell abroad the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Father, one God, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Alleluia. (From the antiphon: Come, Holy Spirit)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 14:25-27

The Spirit comes forth from the Father and the Son. He is the Paraclete, the one called to be at our side. He is the breath of God whose holy work makes us holy by teaching us his Word and thus bringing Christ to us and us to Christ. In revealing Christ he brings forgiveness and eternal life, all that Christ has won for us. For when he reminds us of what Christ said and did for us, Christ comes to impart peace with God and with our own conscience. As St. Bernard said, the Word is the kiss of God on the lips of the soul. Therefore we fearlessly face what is ahead, for we face it with the Father's gift of the Spirit and with the Spirit's gift of the Christ's continuing presence.

FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 37:1-14

The breath of God is active and life-giving. How and where is he active in giving life? Where the Word is proclaimed exactly as he gave it. Ezekiel preaches only what God told him to preach, even when preaching to dry bones. The whole of humanity is nothing but dry bones until God breathes his Word on them. He does it still when and where *his* Word is proclaimed and not apart from it. To say that the Spirit is active and to say that his Word is powerful is to say the same thing. He breathed at creation and brought all things into existence. He breathes in the gospel and conquered our spiritual death, bringing us to Jesus and Jesus to us. On the last day he will breathe again and wake all the dead and take us to be with God in heaven forever. We are entering the Half Year of the Church: Where should we expect to experience the breath of God?

Nowhere else than where his Word is that is in the church as she breathes his Word in all its truth and purity! Everywhere else God sees only bones that stay dry and dead! And what then should be the passion, the all consuming concern of the church? Nothing else but the life-giving breath of God that creates and sustains her.

SECOND LESSON: ACTS 2:1-21

The breath of God is both violent and gentle. Its violence is in the mighty wind. It is in the signs and wonders that he will speak into being to accompany the end of the age, prefigured by the mighty wind on this day. His violent breath however does not create faith. It creates curiosity this day, and one day will inspire dread in those who have not listened to his gentle voice in the gospel. It is when he breathes words through his apostles and prophets that he is most mighty *for us*. For then he creates faith which calls on the Name of the Lord, the Savior. That is the Spirit's real work and glory, bringing us to trust in Jesus for our salvation. Fear is gone and replaced with joyful confidence wrought by the Spirit in the gospel. Therefore, breathe on us, O Breath of God, that we may see Jesus and long for his coming again; pour on us your Spirit that we may be faithful to the Word he speaks while we wait!

HYMN OF THE DAY

176 Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

177 Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest

178 Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest

179 Hail Thee, Festival Day

185 O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace

186 O Spirit of Life, O Spirit of God

187 When God the Spirit Came

188 Creator Spirit, by Whose Aid

189 Jehovah, Let Me Now Adore You

229 This Day at Your Creating Word

263 All Glory Be to God on High

272 Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

398 Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults

471 Renew Me, O Eternal Light

564 There Is a Balm in Gilead

723 Holy Spirit, the Dove Sent from Heaven

753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us

759 Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled

First Sunday after Pentecost—Holy Trinity

We have now entered fully into the Half Year of the Church. We never leave behind Christ and his work for us which was the center of our attention in the Half Year of Our Lord; but now the emphasis will shift to the result of his work through the Word: the work of defining faith, of creating it and inspiring its fruits in the church collectively and in each of us individually [Series B will focus more on the latter]. And so, on the Feast of the Holy Trinity we see the Word creates faith in the Holy Trinity.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 3:1-17	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 6:1-8	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 8:14-17	
<i>Psalm</i>	150	
<i>Color</i>	White	

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God and Father, dwelling in majesty and mystery, filling and renewing all creation by your eternal Spirit, and manifesting your saving grace through our Lord Jesus Christ: in mercy cleanse our hearts and lips that, free from doubt and fear, we may ever worship you, one true immortal God, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, living and reigning, now and forever.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory. Alleluia. (Isaiah 6:3b cf.NIV)

THE GOSPEL: JOHN 3:1-17

Faith in the divine mystery of the Holy Trinity is a miracle beyond all other miraculous signs and wonders. It is a miracle of new birth, altogether the doing of the Spirit when and where it pleases him. Its miraculous nature is evident in the mystery of the Trinity itself and in the core message of the Spirit: We worship God who has been surrendered by his Father to die and give eternal life only to those who trust in him alone for their salvation. The author of our salvation and the author of our trust is one and the same: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. St. Bernard says that there are three great miracles that should astonish us: That the Christ Child is God and man in one person; that Mary is at the same time a mother and a virgin; that faith in the heart of man can embrace such things! The Half Year of the Church focuses on the last of the three.

The text is inexhaustible, and the preacher will want to take care that he does not try to preach everything in it. Keep in mind that many of the points in this text are coming up separately during the next several weeks. Therefore it might be best to stick with the most basic elements of the text in the context of this Sunday: What is the kingdom of the Holy Trinity, and how does he bring us into it?

FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 6:1-8

In bringing us into his kingdom the Holy Trinity employs both the law and the gospel. The law shows us God in all his majesty and terror; it kills us and makes us despair of our own goodness, even of the vain delusion that we enter his kingdom by our merit or decision. No, it is all his work and doing when he forgives our sins by purging that comes from his altar, ultimately the altar of the cross. Then, moved by the gospel, we both trust in him and desire to serve him in his kingdom in accord with what he will say in his Word —not on the basis of our own feelings or reasoning.

SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:14-17

In that kingdom of the Father, created by the work of the Son and brought to us by the Spirit in the gospel, we are not fear-driven slaves. No, so great is the love described in the gospel lesson that God even makes us his adopted sons. We are brothers of Christ the King, children of God the Father, impelled to live and work and pray by the Spirit who lives and works and prays within us. As sons we strive to live not according to our old lusts and desires, but as befits those whose Father is God, whose brother is Christ, whose leader is the Spirit in the Word. Paul is not a sexist with his use of the word *sons*; he is describing a relationship not just of children but of *heirs*; and that's what sons were, heirs of the father's estate. Note too: there is no synergism in vs. 16; the Spirit bears witness in the Word *to* our spirit; our spirit receives his witness and then in Spirit-worked faith says, "Amen."

HYMN OF THE DAY

177 Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest

178 Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest

ADDITIONAL HYMNS

170 Draw Us to Thee

181 Come, Oh, Come, Life-Giving Spirit

185 O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace

186 O Spirit of Life, O Spirit of God

189 Jehovah, Let Me Now Adore You

195 Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty

241 Alleluia! Let Praises Ring

247 Earth and All Stars

248 When in Our Music God Is Glorified

254 The Day Full of Grace

260 Let All Things Now Living

263 All Glory Be to God on High

267 Isaiah, Mighty Seer in Days of Old

277 God, We Praise You

288 The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace

295 Dearest Jesus, We Are Here

297 Baptized in Water

300 See This Wonder in the Making

361 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

391 God Loved the World So that He Gave

461 From Eternity, O God

465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

545 Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit

560 I Hear the Savior Calling

573 Hark! The Voice of Jesus Crying

724 Voices Raised to You We Offer

736 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized

737 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It

739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me

747 There Is a Redeemer

778 How Shall They Hear Who Have Not Heard