

# PLANNING CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

*Year A*

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# CONTENTS

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Contents.....	3
Advent.....	6
First Sunday in Advent .....	8
Second Sunday in Advent .....	10
Third Sunday in Advent.....	12
Fourth Sunday in Advent .....	14
Christmas .....	17
The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Eve.....	19
The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Day .....	22
First Sunday after Christmas .....	24
Second Sunday after Christmas .....	26
Epiphany .....	29
The Epiphany of Our Lord .....	30
First Sunday after the Epiphany—The Baptism of Our Lord .....	32
Second Sunday after the Epiphany .....	34
Third Sunday after the Epiphany .....	37
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany .....	40
Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany .....	42
Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany .....	45
Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany.....	47
Eighth Sunday after the Epiphany.....	49
Last Sunday after the Epiphany—The Transfiguration of Our Lord .....	51
Lent.....	53
Ash Wednesday .....	55
First Sunday in Lent.....	57
Second Sunday in Lent.....	59
Third Sunday in Lent .....	61
Fourth Sunday in Lent.....	63
Fifth Sunday in Lent .....	65
Sixth Sunday in Lent—Palm Sunday.....	67

Maundy Thursday .....	69
Good Friday.....	71
Holy Saturday.....	74
Eastertide.....	75
The Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Dawn .....	76
The Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Day .....	78
Second Sunday of Easter.....	80
Third Sunday of Easter .....	83
Fourth Sunday of Easter.....	86
Fifth Sunday of Easter .....	89
Sixth Sunday of Easter .....	92
The Ascension of Our Lord.....	95
Seventh Sunday of Easter .....	98
The Coming of the Holy Spirit—The Day of Pentecost .....	101
The Season of Pentecost.....	103
First Sunday after Pentecost—Holy Trinity.....	105
Second Sunday after Pentecost .....	107
Third Sunday after Pentecost .....	110
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost .....	113
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost .....	116
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost .....	119
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.....	122
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.....	125
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.....	128
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost .....	130
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.....	133
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.....	136
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.....	139
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.....	142
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost .....	145
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.....	148
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost .....	151

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost ..... 154  
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost..... 157  
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost ..... 160  
End Time ..... 164  
First Sunday of End Time—Reformation Sunday ..... 165  
Second Sunday of End Time—Last Judgment ..... 168  
Third Sunday of End Time—Saints Triumphant ..... 171  
Last Sunday of End Time—Christ the King ..... 174

# ADVENT

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Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation. The Church looks for the coming of her Savior in this threefold advent: his coming in the flesh; his return in judgment; his daily coming in Word and Sacrament. The Church encompasses all these facets of the season in the single word that defines Advent worship: “Come!” Throughout the prayers, verses, and lessons that single word is our invitation, our anticipation, our sure and certain hope. Come, Lord Jesus!

The Prayers of the Day for each Sunday in Advent help set the tone for the day. The prayers are especially beautiful and worth repeating, perhaps, in the sermon introduction or highlighting in the worship folder. These ancient prayers were said by many of the faithful during the week when children would take turns reciting them as they lit the candles on the Advent Wreath.

Traditionally, the *Gloria in excelsis* is not sung during Advent. The absence of this song of praise marks Advent worship with a sense of something missing. During the four weeks of preparation, the Church looks forward to the return of the song of the angels on Christmas Day in celebration of God fulfilling his promises in Christ. *Christian Worship: Occasional Services* offers two resources for the season: the rite for the “Lighting of the Advent Candles” (133), and an advent adaptation of *King’s College Service of Lessons and Carols* (135).

## Progression of Lessons

Each Sunday of Advent serves the same purpose in yearly cycles (ABC).

### ***Advent 1: Keep Watch, for the Lord will come again***

- Year A: Unexpectedly
- Year B: At an unknown time
- Year C: Forewarned by signs

### ***Advent 2: The Forerunner Prepares: Christ is coming***

- Year A: He is near—repent!
- Year B: He is powerful—be baptized!
- Year C: He is coming—prepare!

### ***Advent 3: The Forerunner Explains: The Christ is here!***

- Year A: To his disciples
- Year B: To the religious leaders
- Year C: To the people

### ***Advent 4: The Promised Virgin Birth of Christ***

- Year A: To Joseph
- Year B: To Mary
- Year C: The *Magnificat*

## First Lesson Series in Year A:

The prophet Isaiah has been called the Fifth Evangelist because of the gospel content of his book. Beginning with Advent 1, the pericope includes an eleven-week series of readings from the book of Isaiah. The series leads the Church through the book from chapter 2 to chapter 60. The worship planner might consider a sermon series on Isaiah from Advent through Epiphany. The pastor might also consider using the lessons of Isaiah as the basis for a twelve-week Bible study that would correspond with the first lesson each week. The editor offers the following suggestion:

### Isaiah's Gospel Promises

#### *Promises Made*

Advent 1:	God's kingdom is coming	<i>Isaiah 2:1-5</i>
Advent 2:	God's kingdom is worth waiting for	<i>Isaiah 11:1-10</i>
Advent 3:	God's coming kingdom gives us strength and courage	<i>Isaiah 35:1-10</i>
Advent 4:	God's kingdom will come through the child Immanuel	<i>Isaiah 7:10-14</i>

#### *Promises Kept*

Christmas Day:	Proclaim the good news: God has kept his promise!	<i>Isaiah 52:7-10</i>
Christmas 1:	Tell of the kindness of the LORD: he redeemed his people	<i>Isaiah 63:7-9</i>
Christmas 2:	Rejoice in the LORD: he has clothed us with garments of salvation	<i>Isaiah 61:10-62:3</i>

#### *Promises in Action*

Epiphany:	The Savior rises and shines	<i>Isaiah 60:1-6</i>
Epiphany 1:	The Savior is anointed	<i>Isaiah 42:1-7</i>
Epiphany 2:	The Savior calls a people to himself	<i>Isaiah 49:1-6</i>
Epiphany 3:	The Savior brings light to those in darkness	<i>Isaiah 9:1-4</i>

# FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

---

Keep watch for the unexpected coming of Christ! Its unexpectedness, however, does not change its certainty (cf. Verse of the Day) or our prayer (cf. Prayer of the Day). Rather, the coming of Christ defines our present time because we know that he comes with unexpected judgment on the unbelieving world and unexpected grace for his people. We are filled with hope, with love, and with light. With anticipation in our hearts, we long for the fulfillment, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 24:36-44	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 2:1-5	Genesis 6:9-22, 7:11-23
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 13:11-14	
<i>Psalm</i>	18	
<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: MATTHEW 24:36-44

So unexpected is the coming of Christ, that neither the Church, nor the angels, nor even the Son knows the day or time. Warnings are spoken; promises are made; signs are given. But the great day will come as unexpectedly as the deluge upon the unsuspecting world. Noah had preached; Noah had built; but the world was lost in the darkness of spiritual blindness. The certainty of Christ’s coming is never in question—only the timing. So Christ tells us to keep watch and to be ready, actions that define our present time.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 2:1-5

The first chapter of Isaiah does not paint a pretty picture of Judah and Jerusalem. “Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption” (Isaiah 1:4). But today’s lesson from chapter two shows a completely different picture. Here one sees the glorious destiny that awaits her. In the last days, in the midst of the unexpected judgment, God comes with unexpected grace for his people. The people of chapter one are changed forever. In the coming kingdom many will say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD.” In the coming kingdom, God will teach the people his ways so that they walk in his paths. The coming of Christ defines our present time. We are at the doorstep of the impending age of the kingdom come. We join with Isaiah in living our lives in view of Christ’s unexpected coming: “Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD!”



**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 13:11-14**

Understanding the present time means working and walking in love. We do this, Paul says, because the coming of our Lord is near. Notice the words he chooses: nearer, nearly, almost. The certainty of Christ's coming is never in question, only his timing. Paul encourages us to let the nearness of the kingdom and the unexpected nature of its arrival define our present time. At the very end of the night, Venus rises above the horizon and reflects the brightness of the coming dawn, promising that the day is nearly here. Christ Jesus is our Morning Star, the harbinger of God's coming kingdom. It's almost here! We let that define our present time by living as citizens of the kingdom now. It is not easy to live as in daylight while it's still dark. So Paul tells us to clothe ourselves with the only thing that will give us the power to do it: Jesus Christ our Lord.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 6:9-22; 7:11-23**

Jesus told the story of the Flood to explain the unexpected coming of God in judgment and grace. Noah was a man who worked and walked in the light. But he lived in a world darkened by sin. The lost around him were deaf to his preaching and blind to the signs. The coming of God's judgment was as unexpected as it was terrifying for them. But in the middle of all that judgment, God came in unexpected grace to rescue Noah and his family. As Noah worked and walked in the light, he heeded God's warnings and trusted God's promises. He watched; he waited; he prepared. And God made good on his promise: the same Flood that judged the world also safely carried Noah and his family until they came to rest on a world washed clean.

**NOTES:**

For the next twelve weeks the First Lesson surveys the book of Isaiah from chapter 2 to chapter 60. The preacher may consider a series of sermons or Bible studies on Isaiah from Advent through Epiphany ([see Year A, Introduction](#)).

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

2 Savior of the Nations, Come

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

1 The Advent of Our King	208 Great God, What Do I See and Hear
7 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers	209 Day of Wrath, Oh, Day of Mourning
9 Jesus, Your Church with Longing Eyes	220 O'er the Distant Mountains Breaking
15 Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding	254 The Day Full of Grace
21 Hosanna to the Coming Lord	305 From Depths of Woe I Cry to You
22 O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide	472 Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray
23 Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel	704 Lo, He Come With Clouds Descending
26 Jesus Came, the Heavens Adoring	705 The Night Will Soon Be Ending
30 Rise, Arise	732 We Are Singing, for the Lord is Our Light
206 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying	771 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near	788 Thanks Be to God!

## SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

---

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near! The Forerunner prepares for the coming Christ by preaching repentance that brings renewal of life. The Root of Jesse will come in swift judgment on the unrepentant but in mercy and grace for God’s people. His coming will end the wickedness of the world and usher in a new age restored to the perfection with which God made it.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 3:1-12	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 11:1-10	Daniel 4:19-37
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 15:4-13	Acts 3:19-26
<i>Psalm</i>	130	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: MATTHEW 3:1-12

A voice in the desert cried out, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!” A fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, John dressed like the first Elijah (2 Kings 1:8) and fulfilled the role of the second Elijah (Malachi 4:5-6) as foretold by Gabriel (Luke 1:17). Many people responded to John’s preaching with repentance, baptism, and spiritual renewal. Others neither repented nor produced the fruits of a life renewed by the Spirit. John warned them that God’s ax chops down unfruitful trees and leaves only stumps as witness to his judgment. John told both groups that the Messiah was near: near to the people to save them; near to the religious leaders to judge them. Harvest time had come, and God’s winnowing fork was in his hand to separate the wheat from the chaff.

### FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 11:1-10

David’s dynasty died in 586 B.C. The Babylonians served as the ax of God that cut off the line of Jesse and made David’s family tree nothing but a stump. The lifeless stump was a witness to God’s judgment. But behold, a branch is growing! A new shoot sprouts from Jesse’s stump. God would renew the stump of David’s kingdom, but it wouldn’t be the restoration of an earthly rule and reign over Israel. No, God had greater things in mind. Instead, David’s greater Son would rule over a renewed earth and heaven. “I am making everything new” (Revelation 21:5). In this renewed kingdom, sin and its effects are gone; peace and righteousness rule. The Root of Jesse is a banner for the peoples, and his place of rest will be glorious.

**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 15:4-13**

God renewed the hope of his people by raising up the root of Jesse. Hope in him reshapes our hearts and the resulting fruits of repentance show themselves in our renewed lives. Examples of those fruits can be seen in the unity of our walk and our witness and in our acceptance of our brothers and sisters. The Holy Spirit brings forth such faith and fruit to the glory and praise of God.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: DANIEL 4:19-37**

God had used Nebuchadnezzar as his ax to chop down the unrepentant tree of David. But the king of Babylon failed to heed Daniel’s warning that the ax now sat at the root of his own tree. The prophet told him to repent, for God’s coming judgment was near. Nebuchadnezzar failed to acknowledge God’s sovereign power; he failed to repent and live in newness of life. So God fulfilled the dream: the tree of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign was chopped down. God struck his glory and power and left him with neither civility nor sanity. How true it is: God is able to humble those who walk in pride. The world’s greatest sovereign became like an animal. Yet look at the mercy of God! When Nebuchadnezzar repented and acknowledged and glorified God, the Lord forgave him, renewed him, and restored him.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ACTS 3:19-26**

God used the miracle of the beggar’s healing to capture the attention of the crowd so that Peter and John could preach a message of repentance to the people. They preached the harsh accusations of the law: “You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead,” to prepare the hearts of the people to repent. Then they offered the sweetest gospel message that repentance brings renewal by wiping away sins and bringing God’s refreshment through Christ.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

16 On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 11 Comfort, Comfort All My People           | 437 I Trust, O Christ, in You Alone            |
| 13 There’s a Voice in the Wilderness Crying | 475 The Man Is Ever Blest                      |
| 14 Arise, O Christian People                | 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving          |
| 15 Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding      | 567 Awake, O Spirit, Who Inspired              |
| 20 When All the World Was Cursed            | 577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations           |
| 23 Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel             | 579 Lift High the Cross                        |
| 27 O Jesus, Lamb of God, You Are            | 702 Prepare the Royal Highway                  |
| 28 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord        | 703 My Soul in Stillness Waits                 |
| 47 Behold, a Branch Is Growing              | 709 Christ, Your Footprints through the Desert |
| 205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven           | 710 Jesus, Once with Sinners Numbered          |
| 275 Blest Be the God of Israel              | 723 Holy Spirit, the Dove Sent from Heaven     |
| 276 Praise Be to the Lord                   | 750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate          |
| 305 From Depths of Woe I Cry to You         | 769 Lord of All Hopefulness                    |

# THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

---

In the Messiah's kingdom things are not always what they seem. Appearances can be deceiving and lead to doubt. In the Prayer of the Day the Church asks Christ to drive the darkness of doubt from our hearts and fill us with the light of the knowledge of Christ. Faith in Christ leads us to patiently hope in the Lord's caring plan despite any appearances to the contrary.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 11:2-11	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 35:1-10	Job 1:6-22
<i>Second Lesson</i>	James 5:7-11	
<i>Psalm</i>	146	
<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: MATTHEW 11:2-11

Things were not what they seemed. John languished in prison for preaching righteousness. When he saw the works of Jesus (τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ) questions rose in his mind and doubt filled the hearts of his followers. John knew that Jesus was the Christ, but where were the acts of judgment promised? Why did John look like a failure and the wicked look like they were winning? John sends his disciples to the right place, to Jesus. When we take our doubts and questions to Jesus, he drives the darkness from our hearts and fills us with light. Jesus pointed to his works as signs from God fulfilling the words of the prophet and marking him as the Coming One. Jesus was far more than he appeared to be: he was the Messiah who makes the blind see, the dead live and the poor evangelized. Jesus then points to John and shows greatness hiding behind the cross and persecution. Though John did not seem it, he was the second Elijah and a prophet without peer.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 35:1-10

The coming of the Messiah would change everything. A world destroyed by sin is filled with sorrow and sighing. But things are not always what they seem: A desert is a latent pool; thirsty ground is a future streambed; the blind are future seers, and the lame future leapers. Our certain knowledge that the earth is the Lord's and that he controls everything in it gives us patience and courage to wait for God to make what we see match what we know. Be strong, do not fear; your God will come. His promise to come strengthens feeble hands and fearful hearts. He will come with vengeance and retribution to redress the wrong and with

redemption and rejoicing for God’s people. Jesus fulfilled these words of prophecy in his acts of ministry so that God’s people could see how near God’s kingdom had come!

**SECOND LESSON: JAMES 5:7-11**

Knowing what we do about Christ’s coming kingdom, we want it now. God’s encouragement, however, is for us to be patient. A farmer’s fields may look fallow or dead, but things are not always what they seem. The seed waits inside the earth for the rains and then bursts forth to life. When Christians face persecution or suffering, life can seem like a fallow field. While we wait for the rain, we struggle with questions and doubts. James reminds us that the fallow parts of our lives are simply waiting for God’s timing to bring forth fruit in our lives. The Christian patiently waits for the Lord’s coming, when what we see will finally match what we know.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JOB 1:6-22**

In the second lesson, James points to Job as an example of perseverance in the face of suffering and God’s resulting blessing. To Satan it appeared that Job served God because he was blessed. That was not so. After great suffering and tremendous loss, it appeared to everyone else that Job had absolutely no reason to praise God. That was not so either. Job knew that for the children of God, things are not always what they seem. He had the patience to wait for the rain—to wait for God to make fruitful again the fallow parts of his life.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

14 Arise, O Christian People

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 7 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers               | 357 Jesus, Lover of My Soul               |
| 12 Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes    | 405 Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink  |
| 13 There’s a Voice in the Wilderness Crying | 414 I Leave All Things to God’s Direction |
| 16 On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry       | 415 Be Still, My Soul                     |
| 20 When All the World Was Cursed            | 421 All Depends on Our Possessing         |
| 93 Hail to the Lord’s Anointed              | 449 Children of the Heavenly Father       |
| 192 Triune God, Oh, Be Our Stay             | 507 Lord of Our Growing Years             |
| 235 Praise the Almighty; My Soul, Adore Him | 520 Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old     |
| 252 Oh, Sing to the Lord                    | 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving     |
| 253 I Will Sing My Maker's Praises          | 703 My Soul in Stillness Waits            |
| 275 Blest Be the God of Israel              | 751 Word of God, When All Was Silent      |
| 276 Praise Be to the Lord                   |   |
| 353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness  |   |

# FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

---

God will come to save his people, just as he promised. He saves them through the virgin born Son of David who is also the Son of God, Immanuel. The Church prays for God to come in power to take away the burden of our sins. Since the Garden, there has been only one promised plan to do that: God would take on flesh and blood. Immanuel comes—God in the flesh—exactly as promised to save his people. The use of the *Great O Antiphons* on this Sunday highlights God’s promises kept by invoking an Old Testament title for Christ and anticipating the promise kept by the Christ-child.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 1:18-25	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 7:10-14	Isaiah 7:1-17
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 1:1-7	
<i>Psalm</i>	24	
<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: MATTHEW 1:18-25

Joseph found himself in the middle of an unwelcome nightmare: his bride to be was pregnant, and he was not the father. As a righteous man, he could not go forward with the marriage; as a merciful man, he could not expose Mary to public disgrace. How long did it take for him to fall asleep with broken betrothal promises on his mind? During the night, Joseph sees an angel who calls him “the son of David.” Joseph’s father was Jacob, but the angel reminded Joseph that he was a descendant of kings. Starting this night, he would act as one of David’s line again: he would care for the promised Son who would reign on David’s throne. God had come to save his people, just as he promised. He would do it through the child in Mary’s womb. Joseph believed the promises of God kept in Christ and named the child, “The LORD saves,” knowing full well he was Immanuel.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 7:10-14

Such grace that God would even speak to a wicked king like Ahaz! What God said is even more surprising. He didn’t just promise deliverance and ask that Ahaz blindly trust him. God offered a sign to an unbelieving king to prove that he would keep his promise and save his people. How foolish of Ahaz to refuse! How sinful to make a pretense of piety! God, however, would let no sinful king stand in the way of deliverance for his

people. So God chose the sign. Not merely a sign of Judah's physical safety, God chose a sign that would prophesy the deliverance of the whole world from sin and death. A virgin would give birth to God in the flesh for the salvation of his people. In Christ Jesus, God kept every promise made.

#### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 1:1-7**

After thousands of years of God's promises, Paul looks back and sees every one of them kept in Christ. All of Scripture promised the gospel message summarized in the name: Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus, the man born of Mary, is also our Lord, God himself. This God-man was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power to be the Christ who would save God's people from their sins. Any doubts about Jesus of Nazareth evaporated with the Easter morning dew: the resurrection declared to the world he was Immanuel, God with us. God kept every promise in Christ to give us what we so desperately needed: Grace and peace to you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 7:1-17**

This supplemental lesson expands the First Lesson to include both the geopolitical scene and the intermediate fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Both highlight the day's theme that God will save his people just as he promised. When the people of Judah heard that Aram and Ephraim had allied against them, they were shaken. No wonder! Under King Ahaz, Judah had already lost in battle to Aram—with many prisoners carried away. They had also lost to the Northern Kingdom under Pekah. Consider the scope of their defeat in 2 Chronicles 28: in a single day Pekah killed 120,000 soldiers—including the prince, the officer of the palace and the second-in-command of the kingdom. He also captured 200,000 wives, sons and daughters. The magnitude of this defeat must have weighed heavily on the national consciousness. And now, Aram and Ephraim had joined forces to attack Judah; Judah had no chance whatsoever! Until God spoke and said, "It will not take place, it will not happen." God will save his people, just as he promised. The enemies stacked against the people of God have proven impossible for us to withstand. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh have defeated us again and again. We stand no chance in the battle; we must be lost. Until God speaks and says, "It will not take place, it will not happen." Immanuel has come, just as God promised—the Savior of his people.

**NOTES:**

For at least 1300 years the Church has sung the *Great O Antiphons of Advent* beginning on December 17 and culminating before Christmas Eve. Each antiphon sings of an Old Testament title of the Messiah and calls on Christ to come and fulfill his work. The familiar hymn by John Neale, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, is an adaptation of the *O Antiphons*.

The seven antiphons are:

- O Sapientia* (Wisdom)
- O Adonai* (Lord)
- O Radix Jesse* (Root of Jesse)
- O Clavis David* (Key of David)
- O Oriens* (Dayspring)
- O Rex Gentium* (King of the nations)
- O Emmanuel* (God-with-us)

The first letter of each antiphon, read backwards, spells *ero cras*, “Tomorrow I will be/come.”

*Christian Worship: Altar Book* contains a prayer form of the antiphons (see *CW:AB 174*, noting that it does not maintain the *ero cras* order). Consider using these antiphons on the Fourth Sunday in Advent or during the last midweek service before Christmas Eve.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

23 Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2 Savior of the Nations, Come          | 86 The Only Son from Heaven               |
| 3 Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates | 271 We All Believe in One True God        |
| 4 Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates | 277 God, We Praise You                    |
| 24 The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came  | 344 At the Name of Jesus                  |
| 30 Rise, Arise                         | 363 The King of Glory Comes               |
| 31 O Lord of Light, Who Made the Stars | 372 I Lay My Sins on Jesus                |
| 35 Of the Father’s Love Begotten       | 377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice |
| 36 A Great and Mighty Wonder           | 480 Almighty Father, Heaven and Earth     |
| 39 Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One  | 485 We Give Thee But Thine Own            |
| 41 Let All Together Praise Our God     | 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving     |
| 47 Behold, a Branch Is Growing         | 701 Zion, at Your Shining Gates           |
| 54 Where Shepherds Lately Knelt        | 702 Prepare the Royal Highway             |
| 76 Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love        | 707 Peace Came to Earth                   |



# CHRISTMAS

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The Christmas season celebrates the Incarnation of the Son of God. The eternal Word became flesh that he might be the Christ, anointed to redeem God's people. God had to become man to live under the law and die in our place. Christ's birth, then, is inextricably connected to his death: Good Friday necessitated Christmas. So great is the love of God that even though our sin required such a sacrifice, the Light of the world still descended into our darkness.

Capturing the magnitude of the mystery of Christmas is difficult. Secular Christmas celebrations are godless. Too often, even our own can be trite. Before the worship planner begins picking carols, perhaps he should be like Mary and ponder this *divinum mysterium*:

*Of the Father's love begotten, ere the worlds began to be,  
He is Alpha and Omega, he the source, the ending he,  
Of the things that are, that have been, and the future years shall see  
Evermore and evermore.*

*Oh, that birth forever blessed when the virgin full of grace,  
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the Savior of our race,  
And the babe, the world's Redeemer, first revealed his sacred face  
Evermore and evermore.*

*This is he whom heav'n taught singers sang of old with one accord;  
Whom the Scriptures of the prophets promised in their faithful word.  
Now he shines, the long expected; let creation praise its Lord  
Evermore and evermore.*

*Let the heights of heav'n adore him, angel hosts his praises sing,  
Pow'rs, dominions bow before him and extol our God and King.  
Let no tongue on earth be silent, ev'ry voice in concert ring  
Evermore and evermore.*

– Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (c. 400 AD) in CW 35.

After omitting the *Gloria* for the weeks of Advent, the Church bursts forth in the song of the angels above the Judean countryside: Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth!

*Christian Worship* appoints lessons for both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Celebration of the Sacrament on the festival of the Incarnation is especially appropriate.

By December 25, the secular world is done with Christmas, after gorging itself on it since November. The Church, however, spent four Advent weeks preparing and now spends the Twelve Days of Christmas praising God for the Incarnation. The Twelve Days of Christmas culminate on January 6, the festival of the Epiphany of our Lord.

## Minor Festivals:

December 26	St. Stephen
December 27	St. John
December 28	The Holy Innocents
January 1	The Name of Jesus

In the fourth and fifth century, the Western Church established a triduum of martyr festivals on December 26, 27, and 28 to commemorate St. Stephen, St. John, and the Holy Innocents. Medieval commentators suggest that these three festivals reveal the triple kind of martyrdom endured by the faithful: St. Stephen, martyrdom in will and deed; St. John, martyrdom in will but not in deed; the Holy Innocents, martyrdom in deed but not in will. (see Luther Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 472ff.) The Gospel for Christmas 1 omits the verses that comprise the Gospel for the Festival of the Holy Innocents. Worship planners may consider occasionally celebrating these festivals when they fall on a Sunday. Finally, on January 1, the Church celebrates the circumcision and naming of Jesus, Son of Mary and Son of God.

Propers for these minor festivals can be found in *Christian Worship: Manual* (NPH, 1993).

# THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD: CHRISTMAS EVE

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A child is born who changes everything for his people. The ancient Prayer of the Day has been used on this night for 1500 years. The child of light entered this sin-darkened world and shone the brightness of God’s love upon all people: “Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Verse of the Day). This child would change man’s life, his death, and his destiny.

	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

Two thousand years ago, a child was born who seemed to change everything. This child was declared by his father to be the heir of all his glory; his kingdom and his rule would be described with the word “Gospel.” He proclaimed himself the savior of his people. That child’s name was Octavian. By age 33 he was the undisputed emperor of the world, and he was given a new name, Augustus, the “exalted one.” Augustus raised the expectations of what a leader could accomplish and what a society could achieve. He ended wars and built roads. He found a republic built of brick and left it an empire built of marble. By the time he died, his empire was at peace and the Roman people worshipped him as a god. Yet far from imperial Rome, far from the purple of empire and the riches of power, a teenage girl—a virgin, yet pregnant—was on the move. She traveled to Bethlehem so the great Caesar could count her. While she was there, she gave birth to the one child who didn’t just seem to change everything, but actually did. This child changed man’s relationship with God, his life, his death, his destiny. He did not come to bring fear, but great joy for all of God’s people. The promise made long ago in the Garden was now kept, and the path back to Eden was being blazed, because God himself had come in the flesh: the Christ and the Lord in one person. Here was the child who changes everything. Glory to God in the highest!

**FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 9:2-7**

The people of Judah had a king, but they needed a change for the better. Their earthly king had failed them, and his reign brought them ever closer to loss and destruction. Their predicament pictures mankind's dilemma under the reign of sin. The prophet Isaiah, however, points God's people to a future where everything changes. They were captives, oppressed and afflicted, lost in the dark, when suddenly, the light of a new dawn breaks over them. In the light of this new day, they see that everything is changed. No longer will they be enslaved and hungry and fearful. No longer will they be defeated and broken. Instead, the nation will grow, and the people will rejoice with joy that comes from the kind of abundance found only in harvest or conquest. How will God do all of this? The prophet points to a most improbable place: a child—a child who would end wars and build an eternal kingdom on righteousness and justice. How could a child change everything? He is the Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince<sup>1</sup> of Peace.

**SECOND LESSON: TITUS 2:11-14**

Paul tells us that the Christchild was the epiphany of God's grace to all people, and his appearance changes our destiny in the coming age. Paul reminds us, however, that this child brings changes for this present age as well. The Christ's coming changes the lives of his people because he came to purify for himself a people that are his very own. This purification cost the price of redemption: Jesus Christ gave himself for us. His death on the cross, however, changes us. God's people are redeemed from wickedness and now are eager to do what is good. This grace of God teaches us to live changed lives in the present age—lives as Christ's own people who are waiting with certain hope for the second coming of the Christchild.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

37 Once Again My Heart Rejoices

38 From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**


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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, God does not call Jesus a king here. He certainly does in other places. Perhaps the reason for calling him a prince here is to differentiate him from the kind of kings that God's people had been experiencing. This child was going to be *different*.

2 Savior of the Nations, Come  
28 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord  
34 Now Sing We, Now Rejoice  
40 O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is  
42 Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising  
43 To Thee My Heart I Offer  
44 Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light  
46 Your Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We  
47 Behold, a Branch Is Growing  
50 Once in Royal David's City  
51 I Am So Glad When Christmas Comes  
52 On Christmas Night All Christians Sing  
53 To Shepherds as They Watched by Night  
54 Where Shepherds Lately Knelt  
56 Gentle Mary Laid Her Child  
60 Silent Night! Holy Night  
61 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing  
62 Joy to the World

63 Angels We Have Heard on High  
65 O Little Town of Bethlehem  
66 O Little Town of Bethlehem  
67 What Child Is This  
68 Away in a Manger  
90 The People that in Darkness Sat  
366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild  
377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice  
379 Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound  
434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart  
702 Prepare the Royal Highway  
703 My Soul in Stillness Waits  
705 The Night Will Soon Be Ending  
706 A Stable Lamp is Lighted  
707 Peace Came to Earth  
747 There Is a Redeemer  
753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us

# THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD: CHRISTMAS DAY

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The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Christmas Day is the festival of the Incarnation: the eternal Son of God was born in time as the son of Mary (Verse of the Day) so that in his flesh he might free us from the bondage of sin (Prayer of the Day). From the beginning, the solution to sin was the flesh and blood of God.

	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

John's Christmas story begins in eternity within the Godhead. That the Son is eternally God and that he shared in the creation of the universe only underscores the enormity of his condescension to become man. In a paucity of words Scripture describes the indescribable: *Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν*. "And the Word flesh became and tented among us." How shocking that this had to be true! God had to become flesh and blood to be born under law, to suffer, and to die that he might redeem us. John's expression, "He tented among us," recalls the tabernacle of the Exodus that moved with the people of God in the desert. God was there beneath the skins. So with Christ, God's glory could be seen as he came in grace and truth, in flesh and blood, to give us the right to be children of God.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 52:7-10

The return of Israel from captivity prefigured the work of the Word made flesh who redeemed mankind from sin. The prophecy pictures the watchmen of Jerusalem standing sentinel on the city walls. Suddenly they see messengers descending the mountains that surround Zion. The watchmen shout for joy because the messengers bring news of peace, goodness and rescue: Your God reigns! God is in control and is ruling for his people. He laid bare his holy arm by hiding himself in flesh in order to buy back Jerusalem—not with

gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. God kept his promise, and all the ends of earth will see his salvation.

**SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 1:1-9**

The arrival of God in the flesh inaugurated the last age of this earth. In Jesus Christ all the promises God made were kept. In this age of promises kept, God’s interaction with mankind fundamentally changed. In the past God sent angels and prophets as messengers to his people. But in these latter days, God sent the One who made the universe and who sustains it by the breath of his mouth. God sent the Son who is the exact representation of God’s being and the radiance of his glory. This is the One who came to speak to the people of God. This is the One who took on flesh and blood and became a companion of man—for one purpose: purification of our sins.

**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          | 62 Joy to the World                   |
| 21 Hosanna to the Coming Lord          | 64 Let Us All with Gladsome Voice     |
| 36 A Great and Mighty Wonder           | 67 What Child Is This                 |
| 39 Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One  | 279 O Word of God Incarnate           |
| 40 O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is      | 281 God Has Spoken by His Prophets    |
| 41 Let All Together Praise Our God     | 366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild |
| 45 Oh, Rejoice, All Christians, Loudly | 369 Beautiful Savior                  |
| 48 When Christmas Morn Is Dawning      | 370 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name |
| 49 Rejoice, Rejoice, This Happy Morn   | 400 O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth |
| 50 Once in Royal David’s City          | 568 Good News of God Above            |
| 54 Where Shepherds Lately Knelt        | 570 O Christians, Haste               |
| 55 Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful           | 733 Rejoice In God                    |
| 57 Go, Tell It on the Mountain         | 750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate |
| 58 See in Yonder Manger Low            | 751 Word of God, When All Was Silent  |
| 59 Christ the Lord to Us Is Born       | 752 In Christ Alone                   |
| 61 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing        | 753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us |

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

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God cares for his sons. He cared for his son, the nation of Israel—though they were rebellious. He cared for his Son, Jesus—though Herod raged against him. He even cares for his newly adopted sons—though we do not deserve it. God cared for us by sending his Son to deliver us from the corruption of sin and transform us into sons just like Jesus (Prayer of the Day). That work of Christ gives us peace (Verse of the Day) that only sons can have.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 63:7-9	Hosea 11:1-7
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Galatians 4:4-7	
<i>Psalm</i>	2	
<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: MATTHEW 2:13-15, 19-23

At the birth of Christ, the angels announced good news and great joy meant for all people, but not everyone saw it that way: Herod reacted to the birth of Jesus with fear, opposition, and violence. The malice of Herod, however, could not rob the world of the peace God intended to bring through his Son. God cared for his Son and all the sons of God by using Joseph to keep him safe in the land of Egypt. The words of Hosea found their fulfillment at his return from Egypt—Jesus was Israel reduced to one. God cared for his sons by having his Son serve as their substitute. The closing words, “He will be called a Nazarene,” are problematic since they are not found in the Old Testament prophets. Matthew might have intended a play on words between Nazareth and נֶצְרַת, “branch,” fulfilling Isaiah 11:1. Perhaps, though, he meant that Jesus’ new hometown of Nazareth would contribute to the contempt that he would receive as a man (see John 1:45-46), thus fulfilling the word of the prophets that the Messiah would be a suffering servant.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 63:7-9

Isaiah extols the kindness of the LORD by reminding God’s people of all that he has done for us. The LORD stood by his covenant even though his son, Israel, turned away from him. The LORD showed compassion and mercy to a people who did not deserve it. What but the kindness of God could look at Israel and us and still say, “Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me”? That can only be said because of the work of God’s only true and faithful Son, Jesus. God cared for his sons so much that in the fullness of time,



the LORD became our Savior to redeem us. See how much God cares for his sons: when they are distressed, he is distressed; when they are in danger, he lifts them up and carries them. So now the sons of God join Isaiah saying, “I will tell of the kindness of the LORD.”

**SECOND LESSON: GALATIANS 4:4-7**

God’s care for his sons meant preparing the world for the coming of Christ. The common language of Greek, the peace of the Roman Empire, the ability to travel, the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world—all these served to help the message of Jesus spread. But even more, the time was right for God to fulfill every prophetic promise to care for his children. He commissioned his own Son to become the God-man who subjected himself to law so that everyone under sin’s curse might be bought back. The Incarnation of God meant that children of wrath could become the sons of God, and Pentecost proves our adoption as sons. The Spirit that cries, “Abba, Father,” also testifies to our freedom from sin and our new status as heirs of God’s kingdom.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: HOSEA 11:1-7**

God had made a son for himself in the nation of Israel, but they turned away from God again and again. God had cared for his son by healing him and teaching him and feeding him, but Israel failed to recognize his care. The Father kept calling, but the son turned further and further away. To his rebellious son, Israel, God said, “I love you, but I will judge you.” That judgment on Israel certainly came. But God had not stopped caring for his sons. God sent his Son to be the son Israel should have been so that his repentant children might be his sons again.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

41 Let All Together Praise Our God

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

28 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord  
 30 Rise, Arise  
 35 Of the Father’s Love Begotten  
 37 Once Again My Heart Rejoices  
 55 Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful  
 61 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing  
 86 The Only Son from Heaven  
 122 Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle

176 Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord  
 203 Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word  
 226 To Your Temple I Draw Near  
 291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word  
 465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken  
 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving  
 747 There Is a Redeemer  
 753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

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The Incarnation reveals the unseen God to the eyes of the faithful. The light of Christ illuminates hearts and eyes once darkened by sin (Prayer of the Day), and the whole world sees the salvation of our unseen God made visible in our flesh-and-blood Savior (Verse of the Day).

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 1:14-18	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 61:10—62:3	Genesis 16:1-16
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18	Ephesians 1:3-14
<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 1:14-18

John 1:14 occurs in the Gospel for Christmas Day and for Christmas 2. The worship planner will note each Sunday's distinctly different emphasis. The point of Christmas Day is that God became flesh. The emphasis on Christmas 2 is that the Incarnation reveals the unseen God to us. The sin-darkened eyes of mankind can not see God in his glory; he must remain hidden in unapproachable light. God, however, wanted us to know him—to see him—and so God chose to reveal himself by hiding himself in flesh and blood. This is the great mystery of the Incarnation: Christ is the exegesis of God (ἐκείνος ἐξηγήσατο). Jesus Christ—himself God the one and Only, μονογενῆς θεός—came to make the unapproachable God known to us; he came to make the unseen God seen.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 61:10—62:3

The Messiah promises that the righteousness and glory of the unseen God will be made known to all nations. Then God speaks (62:1ff.) and shows the surprising way he will reveal his glory and righteousness: they will be seen in his people. No longer will they be called Desolate and Deserted. God speaks and makes our righteousness shine like the dawn, our salvation like a blazing torch. As a king's crown shows his power, so the righteousness of his people makes known the glory of the unseen God.

## SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 1:3-6, 15-18

Paul prays that the Ephesians might know God better. There is only one way for us to better see and know the unseen God: the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, must tell us. The way to know God

better is to see exactly what he has done for us (vv. 3-6) and what he will yet do for us (vv. 13-14). The wisdom that comes from the revelation of the Gospel enlightens the eyes of believing hearts (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6) and lets them see and know the hope to which they have been called. This hope is certain because God's people already have the deposit (v. 14), and the promise was made by their adoptive Father (v. 5).

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 16:1-16**

Abram and Sarai believed in the promise of God, but ten years of waiting caused doubts to surface in their minds. Though their intentions might have been good, they did not act according to God's wisdom and revelation. Hagar conceived, but was mistreated by Sarai and fled into the desert—pregnant, alone, helpless. Then the angel of the LORD, the pre-incarnate Messiah, appears for the first time in the Old Testament and makes the unseen God known by loving the unloved, caring for the abandoned, and helping the helpless. The angel of the LORD spoke words of prophecy and revelation to Hagar that revealed what God is like. He is a God who hears (וְקִרְאתָ שְׁמוֹ יְשָׁמְעֶאלָל כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה) and a God who sees and cares for us (אֵל רֹאֵי). Like Hagar, in Christ we now have seen the One who sees us.

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

This supplemental lesson includes Paul's entire doxology on the spiritual blessings in Christ (vv 3-14 are one sentence in the original). Including verses 7-14 ties the lesson more tightly to the Sunday's theme of making known the unseen God. With the blood of Christ God bought us back, forgave our sins and lavished on us wisdom and understanding. True wisdom is understanding the mystery of God's will. That could not be discovered or uncovered; God's will had to be revealed. This is the Gospel message which God purposed in Christ: we would be redeemed by the Son of God made flesh and be presented blameless in his sight.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

34 Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

2 Savior of the Nations, Come  
21 Hosanna to the Coming Lord  
33 All Praise to You, Eternal God  
35 Of the Father’s Love Begotten  
36 A Great and Mighty Wonder  
39 Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One  
41 Let All Together Praise Our God  
62 Joy to the World  
67 What Child Is This  
180 Holy Spirit, God of Love  
238 Oh, Bless the Lord, My Soul  
241 Alleluia! Let Praises Ring  
247 Earth and All Stars  
279 O Word of God Incarnate  
297 Baptized in Water  
311 Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness  
315 Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face  
334 Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

344 At the Name of Jesus  
354 Lamb of God, We Fall before You  
357 Jesus, Lover of My Soul  
361 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence  
368 O Savior, Precious Savior  
376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness  
379 Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound  
392 Not unto Us  
707 Peace Came to Earth  
711 Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure Eternal  
723 Holy Spirit, the Dove Sent from Heaven  
736 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized  
751 Word of God, When All Was Silent  
752 In Christ Alone  
753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us  
764 There Is a Time for Everything

# EPIPHANY

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The twelve days of Christmas culminate at the celebration of the Epiphany of our Lord on January 6<sup>th</sup>. The season of Epiphany highlights the appearance (ἐπιφάνειω) of the Son of God as the Savior of the whole world—both Jew and Gentile. God revealed the mystery of his person and his mission through the words and works of the Father, through the anointing and empowering of the Spirit, and through the preaching and miracles of Christ.

This season of the Savior’s appearance is bracketed by two white Sundays: The Baptism of our Lord and Transfiguration. Since he had come hidden in flesh, recognizing Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God required revelation. From John’s Baptism to the Father’s booming voice, God revealed the truth about Jesus to the world: this son of Mary is the Son of God, come as the Christ. The Father’s testimony about Jesus bookends the season. From the glory of his baptism at the beginning of his ministry to the glory of his transfiguration at its culmination, the voice of the Father declares what flesh had hidden from the world: This is my Son!

The rest of the Sundays in Epiphany are green. Like the green Sundays of Pentecost, Epiphany 2-8 focus on growth and new life in the Church. During Year A, the Gospels come from a continual reading of Matthew and encompass large sections of the Sermon on the Mount with its emphasis on the Christian life.

## Epiphany Themes

Epiphany:	Jesus appears as the Savior of the Nations
Epiphany 1:	Jesus appears as the Christ, the Anointed One
Epiphany 2:	Jesus appears as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world
Epiphany 3:	Jesus appears as the light that shines in the darkness
Epiphany 4:	The Savior’s Sermon: Trust in God’s strength!
Epiphany 5:	The Savior’s Sermon: Let your light shine!
Epiphany 6:	The Savior’s Sermon: Live a holy life!
Epiphany 7:	The Savior’s Sermon: Love your enemies!
Epiphany 8:	The Savior’s Sermon: Don’t worry!
Transfiguration:	Jesus appears as the Son of God in glory

## Minor Festivals

January 18	Confession of St. Peter
January 24	St. Timothy
January 25	Conversion of St. Paul
January 26	St. Titus
February 2	Presentation of our Lord
February 24	St. Matthias

The minor festivals during Epiphany place a special emphasis on the role of ministers of the Word in communicating the message of Christ as the Savior of all nations. From the confession on which the Church is built, to the conversion of the great apostle to the Gentiles, to the replacement God gave in the apostolic ministry, to the men who model pastors in training, the Church sees the grace of God in the ministry of the Word for the world.

# THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

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Jesus appears as Savior of the Nations. The Church remembers January 6<sup>th</sup> as the Twelfth Day which closes the Christmas season. The Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord is the second oldest festival celebrated by the Church, dating to the second century. The Eastern Church commemorates the birth of Christ on this day, but the Western Church remembers it as the “Gentile Christmas” and celebrates Jesus who appeared (ἐπεφάνη) as the Word for the world.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 2:1-12	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 60:1-6	
<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

When the Son of God entered our race, the world barely seemed to notice. Though the Messiah lived within their midst, the powerful men at the temple and palace of Jerusalem took no notice. God, however, set out to display the glory of his Son born in the flesh. He placed his sign in the heavens, and Gentile magi came to acknowledge the birth of Israel’s king and thus fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah. Where had the magi heard the promises? What did they know? Were they recipients of the remnants of Daniel’s testimony? We don’t know what God had revealed to them. The priests and teachers, however, had the prophets, and they had the promises—they were so close. They knew this King of the Jews would be the Christ, born of David’s line in Bethlehem. Yet, they did nothing with what they knew. The magi, though, saw the star and believed. They came, and they worshipped. In that, they were a picture of all the Gentiles who would come to faith in Christ: Gentiles who were not of the patriarchs, the promised land, or the prophets—but Gentiles called by the Gospel, converted by the Spirit and worshipping the true King of the Jews and Savior of the Nations.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 60:1-6

Isaiah speaks God’s promises of the future glory of Israel—glory not realized until the Son of Man came as the Savior of the nations. The union of Christ and the true Israel, the Church, brings undreamed of glory for us. The light of God’s love has appeared among us, and therefore God tells us to rise and shine the light of God’s glory into all the darkness around us. The Church is a beacon of God’s glory that pierces the darkness

of the world. In the glow of this light, Isaiah points Israel to what God is accomplishing through them: Gentiles are streaming to them and kings are coming to their brightness. Not all Gentiles will come (note the absence of the article with  $\epsilon\lambda\theta\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ). Some, like Herod, scurry and hide from the light. Others, like the Magi, come to the brightness of Israel’s dawn, bringing with them new sons and daughters for Israel. As the Church shines her light into the world, Israel can see the promise to Abraham fulfilled: all nations are blessed.

**SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 3:2-12**

The people of Israel knew that the Gentiles had a place in the Old Covenant. The Law had made provisions for them. The prophets had made promises about them. The mystery, however, lay in exactly what kind of place they would have in the New Covenant. The Jews did not understand that God intended the Gentiles to have an *equal* place. The coming of the magi marked the beginning of wave after wave of Gentiles who would come to faith in Christ. God wanted them to be equal partners with the sons of the covenant. Paul shares the mystery that the Gentiles would be  $\sigma\upsilon\gamma\kappa\lambda\eta\rho\nu\omicron\mu\alpha \ \kappa\alpha\iota \ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\sigma\omega\mu\alpha \ \kappa\alpha\iota \ \sigma\upsilon\mu\mu\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omicron\chi\alpha$  which the NIV renders well with its triple “together.” God intends that his joint Church of Jew and Gentile reveal his manifold wisdom and glory—to kings (First Lesson), to the learned (Gospel), and even to the rulers and authorities in heaven (v 10)!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

79 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 63 Angels We Have Heard on High        | 250 From All that Dwell Below the Skies |
| 67 What Child Is This                  | 397 Just As I Am, without One Plea      |
| 80 Angels from the Realms of Glory     | 402 My Faith Looks Up to Thee           |
| 81 Arise and Shine in Splendor         | 427 We Are the Lord’s                   |
| 82 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise    | 461 From Eternity, O God                |
| 83 As with Gladness Men of Old         | 539 In Christ There Is No East or West  |
| 84 Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun  | 556 Rise, Shine, You People             |
| 87 Hail, O Source of Every Blessing    | 569 O Christ, Our True and Only Light   |
| 91 The Star Proclaims the King Is Here | 577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations    |
| 92 Brightest and Best                  | 702 Prepare the Royal Highway           |
| 93 Hail to the Lord’s Anointed         | 703 My Soul in Stillness Waits          |
| 94 O Jesus, King of Glory              | 770 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve     |

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY—THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

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Jesus appears as the Christ, the Anointed One. The titles “Christ” and “Messiah” both mean “The Anointed One,” and they describe how God prepared Jesus for his mission. Since the days of Othniel (Judges 3:10), the Spirit of the Lord empowered God’s heroes to do his saving work. At his baptism, God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power and declared this son of Mary to be the Son of God—the one anointed to be the Savior of mankind.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 3:13-17	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 42:1-7	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Acts 10:34-38	
<i>Psalm</i>	45	
<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: MATTHEW 3:13-17

What kind of God gets baptized? The Baptist’s question confronts every Christian reading this account, and we join in John’s incredulity (cf. ἔχω...σὺ) at Jesus’ intended condescension. Though John objected, Jesus encouraged him to allow this concession in order to fulfill their purpose there together (πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν). Their joint purpose was to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus would do that by being the Messiah and standing in the place of sinful man—first at the font and ultimately at the cross. John would play his part by fulfilling his role as forerunner: baptizing with water that the Messiah might be revealed (John 1:31). When John consented and baptized Jesus, the Spirit fulfilled the promises of Isaiah (First Lesson), and Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power (Second Lesson). In this inauguration into his office as the Christ, God prepared the Messiah for his mission with an unlimited outpouring of the Spirit (John 3:34). In the very next verse, empowered and led by the Spirit, the hero of God immediately goes out to war against Satan on behalf of mankind (Matthew 4:1ff), fulfilling all righteousness and bringing us peace.



**FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 42:1-7**

This Servant Song foretells the Messiah's work: he will be God's own servant sent to accomplish God's mission. God will choose him, uphold him and delight in him. God will also put his Spirit on him that he might bring justice to the nations. His ministry is characterized by gentleness toward the weak, but also by an inexorable driving toward his goal. He will not falter in the work for which he was anointed until he brings forth the right verdict (עֲדֵי־יְשִׁים מִשְׁפָּט): the justice that comes from God and declares his people righteous in his sight because of Messiah's work. He will be the Mediator of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) based on his person that will bring the people and the Gentiles out of the darkness of sin's prison. Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism shows how these prophecies were perfectly fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

**SECOND LESSON: ACTS 10:34-38**

The Gentile household of Cornelius had heard the message about the Savior, but then Peter came as an eyewitness of prophecy's fulfillment. Jesus was the Christ because at his baptism God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power. Immediately, the empowerment of the Spirit made itself evident in the works of Jesus as he did the Messiah's work of healing those under the power of the devil. This anointing as Savior resulted in Peter's amazing statement in verse 36, "the message proclaiming the good news (τὸν λόγον εὐαγγελιζόμενος) of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all." The message God sent Israel consisted in that one word: peace. That message was on the lips of the angels at Christmas and on the lips of Christ at his resurrection. Jesus restored peace between man and God because that's exactly what he had been anointed to do.

**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  
294 Baptized into Your Name Most Holy  
299 All Who Believe and Are Baptized  
366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild  
390 Salvation unto Us Has Come

439 Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me  
451 Precious Lord, Take My Hand  
577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations  
709 Christ, Your Footprints through the Desert  
710 Jesus, Once with Sinners Numbered  
765 Day by Day

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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Jesus appears as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This Lamb would take away the sins of the world and bring both Israel and the Gentile nations into the kingdom of God. The hearts that see this Savior in faith cannot help but take news of this salvation to the ends of the earth.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 1:29-41	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 49:1-6	Isaiah 49:1-7
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 1:1-9	Acts 13:38-49
<i>Psalm</i>	89	
<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 1:29-41

As the last and greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist rightly summarizes the totality of God's plan of salvation by pointing to Jesus and calling him the Lamb of God. Though not an Old Testament title, John's name for Christ is the perfect sum of the sacrificial system. Christ is the fulfillment of all the sacrificial victims of the Old Testament, from Yom Kippur's goat to the Passover Lamb and every sin and guilt offering in between. They are all fulfilled in the Son of God made flesh that he might stand in our place, that he might take the burden of sins off the world and onto his shoulders, and that he might die in our stead. Seeing the Lamb of God leads believers like John and Andrew to bring his salvation to the ends of the earth.

### FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 49:1-6

Listen to the message meant for all nations: The Messiah is a weapon in the hand of God. God concealed him like an arrow in a quiver: the Messiah would come with his glory hidden in flesh. That meant the Servant would suffer, but in that suffering God would display his splendor. Jesus struggled with the cup he was to drink, but trusted in God's promised reward (v 4). God would use the Servant to restore Israel and shine the light of his love on all the Gentiles, too. The salvation won by the Lamb would be brought to the ends of the earth. When Simeon laid eyes on the Christ-child, he remembered these words and could depart in peace, because he knew that God had now kept his promise.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9**

This lesson begins a seven-week set of continual readings through 1 Corinthians 1-4 that runs from Epiphany 2-8. The preacher may consider a sermon series on the unity of the Church. In this section, Paul shows the great confidence he has in the Christian congregation in Corinth—even though they struggled with many congregational problems and sins. Paul’s confidence came from knowing that the burden of their sins had been picked up and carried by the Lamb of God, so that they will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus. Paul reminds us that our blameless state on the day of Christ will not rely on our faithfulness, but on the faithfulness of God.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 49:1-7**

The addition of one verse features the LORD himself speaking and ratifying the Servant’s words. He promises that though his Servant will suffer and be despised, the LORD will not forget him, but will ensure his glory and honor. To that promise he adds a pledge on his name as the Redeemer and the Holy One of Israel. Though Christ would be the Lamb of God who would suffer and die to bear our sins, though he would be rejected and despised, God promised to glorify him again. He promised that every eye will see him—even those who pierced him—and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ACTS 13:38-49**

In Pisidian Antioch, Paul preached the message of the Lamb of God: the sacrifices in the Law of Moses could not justify; only the Lamb sacrificed for sin could. The Gospel resulted in faith in some Jewish hearts and rejection in others. In the face of opposition, Paul and Barnabas fulfilled the promises of God in Isaiah and made Christ a light to Gentiles and brought salvation to the ends of the earth.

*Note: The Church remembers the first disciple of Jesus with the Feast of St. Andrew on November 30<sup>th</sup>. His distinction as first of the disciples is commemorated each new Church Year as Advent 1 is celebrated on the Sunday nearest the Feast of St. Andrew, the first disciple.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

86 The Only Son from Heaven

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

15 Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding  
20 When All the World Was Cursed  
27 O Jesus, Lamb of God, You Are  
78 O Light of Gentile Nations  
85 O God from God, O Light from Light  
88 To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord  
89 To Jordan's River Came Our Lord  
100 A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth  
101 Behold the Lamb of God  
181 Come, Oh, Come, Life-Giving Spirit  
265 This Is the Feast of Victory  
269 In Peace and Joy I Now Depart  
288 The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace  
352 Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor  
391 God Loved the World So that He Gave

394 Blessed Are the Saints of God  
438 In God, My Faithful God  
552 By All Your Saints Still Striving  
567 Awake, O Spirit, Who Inspired  
571 From Greenland's Icy Mountains  
576 Spread, Oh, Spread the Mighty Word  
577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations  
709 Christ, Your Footprints through the Desert  
710 Jesus, Once with Sinners Numbered  
714 The Lamb  
743 O Gracious Lord, I Firmly Am Believing  
746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd  
770 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve  
772 When Jesus Came from Nazareth

# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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Jesus appears as the light that shines in the darkness. Dark places remain covered in the shadow of sin and unbelief. Now there are, however, bright places, too, and there you find God’s children. Jesus shines his light by preaching repentance and the good news of the nearing kingdom, and he invites us to follow him to a life illumined by him. Following him means living in the joy of freedom (First Lesson) and walking in the light of love for God and brother (Second Lesson).

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 4:12-23	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 9:1-4	Isaiah 8:19—9:2
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 1:10-17	1 John 2:3-11
<i>Psalm</i>	27	
<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: MATTHEW 4:12-23

The light of the world appeared and began to cast its beams. Fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy, the bulk of Christ’s ministry took place in Galilee of the Gentiles which had been so oppressed. Galileans were the first to see the light of God’s day breaking over the world. From that time on, Jesus began to preach, and we hear the first public words of Jesus Christ: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. With those words the Holy Spirit describes Jesus shining his light into the shadowed nooks and crannies of the world. From fishing boats to synagogues, from workmen to lame men, Christ cast a beacon of light into the darkened world around him with his three-fold ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing. The kingdom of heaven drew near and called God’s children to follow the light and live in the light.

*Note: The Gospel includes the promise of Jesus to make his disciples “fishers of men.” While it is a compelling component of the Gospel, Epiphany 3, Year A, emphasizes Jesus as the light of the world. Worship planners may save the theme of discipleship for Epiphany 3, Year B.*

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 9:1-4

The story of Zebulon and Naphtali was one of suffering. These northern tribes bore the brunt of foreign attacks, most notably by Assyria. Adding insult to injury, the land had become Galilee of the Gentiles, a

melting pot of resettled peoples and a hot bed of crass syncretism. It was a land covered by the darkness of gloom and unbelief. Though the people's punishment was well deserved, it was not an end to itself, but a means to God's end. God's plan broke upon them as suddenly as light shining into the darkness when Jesus appeared and began to preach and teach. He fulfilled every one of Isaiah's prophecies: he honored them with his presence; he gladdened them with his gifts; he freed them with his sacrifice for sin.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-17**

In the second of a seven-week series of readings, Paul appeals to the church that there be no divisions among the body of Christ. There is only *one* Light—Jesus. All other ministers are merely servants of the Light. Following the light that shines in the darkness means fostering a unity of mind and thought among Christian brothers and sisters. No room remains for selfish pride or sinful divisions in the congregation. So strongly does Paul emphasize this that he is thankful he did not baptize many among them—lest anyone think that Paul was more important than the gospel he preached and thus empty the cross of its power to save.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 8:19—9:2**

The supplemental selection focuses more tightly on this Sunday's theme. Man cannot find his way through the darkness of the world except by inquiring of God. No spirit, no man, no other message brings light to those living in darkness. To the law and to the testimony! There you find the Word, the great light for those living in darkness.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 JOHN 2:3-11**

How can we be certain that we know God? John says, "Obey his commands." The gnostic heretics that John combatted had little regard for laws and sin and the commands of God. They felt they knew God well enough without worrying about acts of obedience. How similar to modern unbelievers and even to many Christians today! They think they know God, but they have little time for talk of sin, guilt, and obedience. John tells us that contrary to their opinion, they do not know God. Jesus, our Morning Star, has already come, and the light of his dawn is beginning to break over the world, and the time for deeds of darkness is fading fast. There are still places of deep darkness, but that is not the place to find God's children. They will be found walking in the light and shedding their own light on the darkness around them by living in love for God and brother.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

85 O God from God, O Light from Light

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

81 Arise and Shine in Splendor

84 Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun

86 The Only Son from Heaven

90 The People that in Darkness Sat

254 The Day Full of Grace

279 O Word of God Incarnate

280 Thy Strong Word

338 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

361 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

363 The King of Glory Comes

378 All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall

419 If God Himself Be for Me

423 Not in Anger, Mighty God

424 O God, Forsake Me Not

452 Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus

453 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke

460 How Can I Thank You, Lord

463 Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult

525 The Son of God, Our Christ

537 Onward, Christian Soldiers

555 For All Your Saints, O Lord

556 Rise, Shine, You People

560 I Hear the Savior Calling

566 We All Are One in Mission

569 O Christ, Our True and Only Light

577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations

613 Come, You Thankful People, Come

614 Sing to the Lord of Harvest

703 My Soul in Stillness Waits

732 We Are Singing, for the Lord is Our Light

745 May the Peace of God

767 The Lord Is My Light

770 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve

772 When Jesus Came from Nazareth

773 In Unity and Peace

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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The Savior’s Sermon: Trust in God’s strength! The Beatitudes are hard for us to swallow. Jesus seems to be espousing a Christianity imbued with fatalism at best or defeatism at worst. Look closer, however, and see what he says. The weaker you are, the stronger God is in your life. The weaker you are now, the more ready you are to trust in a future reward. Look at the past acts of God’s grace and you will find many reasons to trust his strength in the face of adversity, persecution or sorrow.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 5:1-12	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Micah 6:1-8	Daniel 3:13-27
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 1:26-31	
<i>Psalm</i>	1	37
<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 4:18)

**THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:1-12**

In the Beatitudes, our Savior turns the world upside down. He calls blessed the people this world never would. He calls blessed people that the world would use as doormats! The world praises the brash, the strong, and the self-sufficient. Jesus calls blessed what others see as weak or stupid. To live this kind of blessedness requires a deep trust in the Lord’s strength and a long-term view of life. Jesus calls us blessed even in circumstances like mourning and persecution, because he is looking beyond the troubles of this world to the reward that is waiting for the people of God. Like reading the last chapter of a book, Jesus takes the mystery out of a life filled with sorrow by showing us the end, the outcome of life lived trusting in God’s strength. All the weak children of God can rejoice and be glad—even now—because our reward will be great!

**FIRST LESSON: MICAH 6:1-8**

God builds a case against the people of Israel. He calls the mountains as witnesses and lodges a charge against the unfaithful people. Yet look at the grace when he still calls them, “My people!” This faithless and wayward group he still calls his own and reminds them of all his righteous acts from the Exodus until the crossing of the Jordan (from Shittim to Gilgal). Israel, though, does not respond in faith, but in sinful pride: What *must I do* to make this right (v 6)? No sacrifice from human hands could clear the guilt. The sacrifice God wanted was a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17) that knows its weakness and trusts in the



strength of God’s saving grace. Then God will give the strength to act justly, to love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

### SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

Paul points the Corinthians to themselves as an example of God’s strength made perfect in weakness. The majority of them did not come from the upper crust of society or the ranks of the learned. God, however, chose them. Paul’s list of God’s chosen ones fits well with Jesus’ description of the blessed ones in the Gospel. God chooses the losers of this world, not the winners; he chooses the weak, not the strong, so that there is no doubt as to the nature of his one-sided grace. The weaker we are, the more ready we are to trust in God’s strength and boast in the work he does in us.

### SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: DANIEL 3:13-27

Rejoice and be glad, Jesus said, because great is your reward *in heaven*. He does not promise to keep us from a martyr’s death or Christian persecution *on earth*. He promises to reward us in spite of them. That we might trust his promises of future reward, however, he shows us his righteous acts of the past. The God of the Three Men in the Fiery Furnace can be trusted! As they stood before great Nebuchadnezzar, these men looked weak. As they chose the path of righteousness rather than accommodation, they seemed stupid. As they spoke about a powerful God, their words and actions seemed powerless. At the weakest moment of their lives—despised, condemned, bound hand and foot and falling into an inferno—they trusted that God was their strength, and he did not fail them.

### HYMN OF THE DAY

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

### ADDITIONAL HYMNS

125 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	430 Evening and Morning
223 As We Begin Another Week	438 In God, My Faithful God
249 God of Mercy, God of Grace	446 I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus
290 One Thing’s Needful	491 O Master of the Loving Heart
325 How Blest Are They Who Hear	499 O God of Mercy, God of Might
347 Jesus! and Shall It Ever Be	550 Behold a Host, Arrayed in White
383 Blessed Are They, Forever Blest	758 Blest Are They
403 I Know My Faith Is Founded	763 Jesus Sat With His Disciples
415 Be Still, My Soul	781 I Lie, O Lord, within Your Care
421 All Depends on Our Possessing	

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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The Savior’s Sermon: Let your light shine! Jesus tells us: You are...so be. You are the light of the world, so be light for the earth. You are the salt of the earth, so be salt for it. Our calling as sons of God means our lives will reflect our new status, and the world around us will be blessed by us. The Church prays that God would help us believe and then do the things that are pleasing in his sight (Prayer of the Day).

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 5:13-20	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 58:5-9a	Joshua 24:14-24
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 2:1-5	1 Peter 2:9-12
<i>Psalm</i>	111	
<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)

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:13-20

Jesus’ sermon moves from the promises of the Beatitudes to his commands for the Christian life. The Christians blessed by Christ are called to be blessings to the world around us. You are salt, Christ says, so be it: act as the preservative that keeps this world from rotting. You are light, so be it: shine into the darkness of the world that people might see and know how different you are. The message of grace is not a message of antinomianism. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it—first *for us*, and then *in us*. Our righteousness could never be enough—even if we could keep the 613 laws of the Pharisees—but Jesus’ righteousness is. Now he commands our light to shine (λαμπάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν) that our deeds might give evidence of our faith to the praise of God the Father who created us to do them.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 58:5-9A

Going through the motions of fasting did not make an acceptable fast. Crass hypocrisy thinks a mere outward form of faith is enough. Here God tells his people that the proof of repentance doesn’t consist in the form of their fast but in the deeds of their faith. In the same way merely going through the motions of faith in Christ is not an acceptable substitute for a true change of heart. God wants us to fulfill the Law by loving him and our neighbor. Real repentance leads to fruits—living as salt and light. Look at the promises

God gives to accompany his call to obedience! Your light will break forth; your healing will quickly appear; your righteousness will be before you and the glory of the LORD will have your back.

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

This is the fourth lesson of the seven-week reading from 1 Corinthians. Although Jesus commands us to be salt and light as a witness for the world, our deeds can never become a source of pride. Paul’s ministry among the Corinthians was not based on eloquent words or superior wisdom—but only on Christ and him crucified. Paul’s message and preaching didn’t display his own works or power, but the Spirit’s. Our lives as salt and light always point not to self but to Christ that faith might rest not on men, but on God.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JOSHUA 24:14-24**

Faith responds to God’s grace by promising to live as salt and light. Joshua pointed the people of Israel back to the gracious acts of God who had delivered them from every enemy. Now in possession of the Promised Land, God’s people could reflect on God’s great acts of grace and power in their lives. Seeing all God had done, the people vowed to Joshua to live as salt and light: “We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.” As the children of God today, we see that God has defeated enemies far fiercer than the Amorites, Perizzites, and Canaanites. Sin, death, and the devil are vanquished. The gates to the heavenly promised land stand open. Looking at God’s great acts of grace and power, we cannot help but join in vowing our obedience to God. We will put away the gods of self and sin, and through the Spirit we will yield our hearts and join with Joshua in his life of salt and light: As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 2:9-12**

The call of God made us part of a new people in order that we might declare his praises. Peter tells us to live lives that are different from the world around us—as different as light is to darkness. Called out of the darkness, we live in this world like foreigners who know that this is not our home. Strangers to the world, we abstain from sin and live such good lives that even the pagans will have to give God glory for his work in our lives. Called into the wonderful light, we let that shine on everyone around us.

**NOTE:**

*For the next four weeks Jesus preaches the sanctified Christian life in the Sermon on the Mount. The preacher may prepare by reviewing the Formula of Concord’s articles on Good Works and the Third Use of the Law (SD IV and VI).*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

280 Thy Strong Word

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

79 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star  
200 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God  
201 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God  
236 All Praise to God Who Reigns Above  
241 Alleluia! Let Praises Ring  
279 O Word of God Incarnate  
285 The Ten Commandments Are the Law  
291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word  
325 How Blest Are They Who Hear  
359 Jesus, My Great High Priest  
366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild  
383 Blessed Are They, Forever Blest  
387 Drawn to the Cross

390 Salvation unto Us Has Come  
394 Blessed Are the Saints of God  
458 May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill  
491 O Master of the Loving Heart  
506 Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall  
521 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace  
523 God of Grace and God of Glory  
526 We Are Your People  
571 From Greenland's Icy Mountains  
579 Lift High the Cross  
596 Let Me Be Yours Forever  
735 Speak, O Lord  
774 Church of God, Elect and Glorious

# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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The Savior’s Sermon: Live a holy life! Jesus came to free us *from* sin. He did not come to free us *to* sin. The commands in the lessons today remind us just how holy our God is, and their dire warnings remind us just how holy he wants us to be. After examining our lives, we must despair, but the Verse of the Day reminds us to flee to Christ who has the words of life. Then the Prayer of the Day asks that we might be given the grace to both know and do what pleases him.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 5:21-37	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Deuteronomy 30:15-20	2 Samuel 11:1-17, 26-27
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 2:6-13	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
<i>Psalm</i>	119a	
<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)

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:21-37

Jesus commands us to be holy in our relationships with our brothers, our adversaries, our bodies, our spouse, and our God. Hearing his instructions for the Christian life, we see that God is far holier than we can imagine! How high Jesus sets the bar here: not just acts, but thoughts—not just words, but attitudes, are judged by our God! In the place of a pharisaical form of godliness, Jesus calls for true spiritual righteousness. God’s demands of holiness only highlight the depravity of our sinful nature. Let the preacher bring God’s Law in all its severity and preach his hearers down to hell, until the flesh despairs of itself and can only cry, “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!” Then let the preacher boldly proclaim that the Savior who preaches the holy life is the Savior who lived the holy life as our Substitute. Let him proclaim forgiveness that is greater than our depravity and mercy that far outweighs our wickedness.

## FIRST LESSON: DEUTERONOMY 30:15-20

Moses made it clear that the choice between God and sin was also the choice between life and death. He reminded God’s people that Israel had received a two-sided covenant from God: If you are my people, I will be your God. If you are not my people, you will be destroyed. The choice was a no-brainer! Love the LORD your God and walk in his ways. If serving God was a no-brainer for Israel, how much more for us, who have received the one-sided covenant of God’s grace? We know the LORD is our life, and so we listen to his voice and hold fast to him.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-13**

In the continuation of the seven-week series, Paul says that godly wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit who does two things: he reveals what God has prepared for us, and he makes us understand it. Knowing and understanding what God has done for us creates true, godly wisdom that will show itself as we live holy lives.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 2 SAMUEL 11:1-17, 26-27**

Our Savior’s call to holy living leads us to have a healthy fear of sin. What a warning God provides us in David! When the king was at the height of his power and full of God’s blessing, his great fall began. Why? Because he toyed with sin. He let lust fester and morph into adultery. He spoke lies until deception ruled his heart. He let selfishness metastasize into a godless disregard for any life but his own. He thought he could toy with sin, but in the end it was sin and Satan that toyed with him. Jesus’ call to live a holy life is like a mother warning her child to beware a hot stove. It is a call motivated by love and meant for our safety.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12**

Paul’s encouragement to live a holy life serves as a great model for preaching sanctification to a congregation. He does not speak to them as heathens, but as people who are in fact living in order to please God. Paul’s words, then, instruct and admonish them to do this more and more. The authority behind his preaching of sanctification did not come from Paul’s life but from the authority of Christ himself. This is what Christ wants! The Thessalonians faced the same problem we do: we know what God wants; we understand it; we just don’t do it consistently. Paul applies the warning of God’s Law and the calling of God’s Gospel. Paul repeatedly emphasizes this: You know it, so now we urge you to do it more and more.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

121 Jesus, Grant that Balm and Healing  
 186 O Spirit of Life, O Spirit of God  
 221 Blessed Jesus, at Your Word  
 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  
 348 Jesus, Jesus, Only Jesus  
 390 Salvation unto Us Has Come  
 452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus  
 459 O God, My Faithful God  
 462 Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways

464 Jesus Christ, My Pride and Glory  
 471 Renew Me, O Eternal Light  
 493 Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive  
 503 Oh, Blessed Home, Where Man and Wife  
 505 Love Is the Gracious Gift  
 509 How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts  
 536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s Head  
 583 Now that the Daylight Fills the Sky  
 586 O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright  
 764 There Is a Time for Everything  
 776 Sing with All the Saints in Glory

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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The Savior’s Sermon: Love your enemies! What could be more counterintuitive? Yet Christ calls his disciples to a love for our neighbor that models itself after Jesus’ love for the world. As Luther said: *Christi sumus in nominativo et genitivo* (We are Christs—with and without the apostrophe). A heart like Christ’s has no room for vengeance, but is filled with love for all.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 5:38-48	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Leviticus 19:1, 2, 17, 18	1 Samuel 26:(1-6) 7-25
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 3:10, 11, 16-23	Romans 12:9-21
<i>Psalm</i>	103	
<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: MATTHEW 5:38-48

Our flesh finds Jesus’ commands revolting. The human animal snarls when attacked and bites back when bitten. Jesus, however, tells us not to resist evil, to turn the other cheek, to love our enemies. Who would live like this? Only the Son of our heavenly Father. God demonstrated his love for us in this: when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus himself prayed for his enemies who crucified him. He most certainly was his Father’s Son. Now God calls us, his sons, to live like Jesus and love people as perfectly as the Father does. As God makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, so he commands us to shine the light of our love on everyone around us.

## FIRST LESSON: LEVITICUS 19:1, 2, 17, 18

This is the passage that Jesus references in the Gospel. However, some of the Pharisees had changed its interpretation by adding “but hate your enemy” to the phrase “love your neighbor.” While that makes sense to our flesh, it is completely out of character with God. The standard for our life is the holiness of God, not our feelings or wants. God’s holy standard is clear: love for our neighbor must be equal to the love we have for our very self. Make no room in your hearts for vengeance or grudges, but live with the holiness of God as your standard and your example. Live also with the last sentence as your comfort and motivation: I am the LORD, the God of the covenant, the God of free and faithful love for you.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 3:10, 11, 16-23**

This is the sixth in a seven-week series of readings from 1 Corinthians. Paul could have borne a grudge against Apollos or Peter because of the divisions present in the church of Corinth. Instead, he models Christian love for our neighbor and Christian unity with his words and actions. Paul lives and speaks and loves like Christ, seeking only to serve. The world would call it foolishness, but God calls such selfless love the wisdom of God.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 1 SAMUEL 26:(1-6) 7-25**

Would anyone have faulted David for killing Saul? Saul had unfairly abused him; Saul had unfairly exiled him; Saul had unfairly tried to kill him. David could have claimed his actions were in self-defense or in fighting a just war or in taking the office to which he had been anointed. Who would have found fault with him? Certainly not the sons of Zeruah! Though unfailingly brave, they could never understand David's lack of pragmatic action (see Abner, Absalom, Shimei, etc.). Yet David showed again that he was a man after God's own heart. David trusted that his reward was with his God, and so he had no need for vengeance. That freed him to be able to love even his enemy Saul.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 12:9-21**

In the twelfth chapter of Romans Paul urges us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God. In this lesson we find practical examples of how spiritual acts of worship are offered to God through our love for our neighbor. Loving our brothers and sharing with those in need certainly makes sense. But like Jesus, Paul goes further: bless your persecutors and don't take revenge because that is God's domain. Our domain is the opposite of vengeance; our domain is the imitation of Christ. Sons of the Father love their enemies and pray for their persecutors.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

492 Son of God, Eternal Savior

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 202 If God Had Not Been on Our Side      | 498 Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire |
| 234 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty     | 505 Love Is the Gracious Gift            |
| 238 Oh, Bless the Lord, My Soul          | 521 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace  |
| 257 My Soul, Now Bless Your Maker        | 529 Built on the Rock                    |
| 285 The Ten Commandments Are the Law     | 531 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation   |
| 386 Now I Have Found the Firm Foundation | 536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head |
| 403 I Know My Faith is Founded           | 538 The Church's One Foundation          |
| 410 Our Father, Who from Heaven Above    | 563 Go Labor On                          |
| 459 O God, My Faithful God               | 580 Every Morning Mercies New            |
| 479 Jesus, Your Boundless Love to Me     | 586 O Splendor of God's Glory Bright     |
| 486 Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us    | 615 We Thank You for Your Blessings      |
| 493 Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive       | 760 When Peace, like a River             |
| 494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds          | 773 In Unity and Peace                   |



# EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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The Savior’s Sermon: Don’t worry! Your heavenly Father’s steadfast love is constant (Verse of the Day), and he wants to give you peace based not on an abundance of possessions but on the contentment that comes from living out of his hand. The Church prays for God’s peace (Prayer of the Day) that teaches Christians that we don’t need to worry about anything, but can learn to trust and be content with our Father’s care.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 6:24-34	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 49:13-18	Genesis 32:6-12
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 4:1-13	Philippians 4:8-13 (14-20)
<i>Psalm</i>	119b	37
<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, RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 6:24-34

Slaves can only have one master. You are either a slave to stuff or a slave to God. Material blessings are not evil—God knows that we need them. But a frantic pursuit of earthly blessings or a constant worry about our bodily lives suggests an obedience to the wrong master. When we acknowledge God as the source of our security, we can work hard, pray hard, and then accept what comes from the hand of our Father. Worrying is worthless: it is ineffective and unnecessary. In his sermon today, Jesus says, “Don’t worry!” It is not a harsh command, but the gentle reminder of a parent to a child concerned about things he needn’t be. Jesus tells us to look at his Father’s love, and then draw the logical and inevitable conclusion: Therefore...therefore, do not worry.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 49:13-18

Isaiah foresaw a people who would have every reason to worry. Jerusalem would be conquered, its walls demolished, its leaders exiled, its glory taken away. Christians facing grief and loss today often share Jerusalem’s worry that the LORD has forgotten them. Note well the words that God gave his people! He doesn’t explain away the grief. He doesn’t rationalize the loss by trying to show them some greater good. No, he simply tells them that he could never forget his people. Their names are engraved on his hands. They are always in his heart, and their welfare is foremost in his mind. What wonderful words for sorrowful or

worrying Christians! The heavens and earth are singing, because they know that God will comfort his people and bring them his peace.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-13**

This is the last lesson in the seven-week series of readings from 1 Corinthians. Paul did not let his hardships drag him into worry or despair. Though slandered and cursed, the apostles sought God’s kingdom. Though treated badly, they kept their hope in Christ. A Christian who puts his hope and peace in the hands of God will find trust and contentment in any situation.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 32:6-12**

Jacob had good reason to worry. He had robbed his brother of his birthright and then robbed him of his blessing. He had fled from Esau’s rage years earlier, but now had to bring his family back into the territory of a brother who certainly must hate him. Jacob sent a peace offering, but heard the news that his brother’s men of war were marching toward his camp. In great fear and distress Jacob made plans for the worst and then did the best thing a Christian faced with worry can do: he prayed. He remembered God’s promises and all his gracious acts, and then sought his peace in the hand of his God. Here is a model prayer for Christian peace: “I am afraid...but you have said...”

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 4:8-13 (14-20)**

God’s peace teaches us contentment whatever our lot in life. Yes, contentment must be learned. Paul learned to find his peace not in health or wealth, but in Christ. Whether well fed or hungry, in plenty or in want, we can live without worry because the peace of God guards our hearts and lives. Godly contentment frees us to use our material blessings like the Philippians did, as fragrant offerings to God.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

236 All Praise to God Who Reigns Above

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

69 Across the Sky the Shades of Night  
 253 I Will Sing My Maker's Praises  
 290 One Thing’s Needful  
 319 On My Heart Imprint Your Image  
 320 On My Heart Imprint Your Image  
 348 Jesus, Jesus, Only Jesus  
 349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure  
 355 Take the World, but Give Me Jesus  
 395 Seek Where You May to Find a Way  
 414 I Leave All Things to God's Direction  
 421 All Depends on Our Possessing  
 425 Oh, Sing, My Soul, Your Maker’s Praise  
 430 Evening and Morning

438 In God, My Faithful God  
 446 I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus  
 477 What Is the World to Me  
 533 I Love Your Kingdom, Lord  
 542 Dear Lord, to Your True Servants Give  
 547 We Bid You Welcome in the Name  
 548 O Lord, in Prayer You Spent the Night  
 570 O Christians, Haste  
 610 Now Thank We All Our God  
 757 Where Your Treasure Is  
 760 When Peace Like a River  
 762 Consider How the Birds Above  
 781 I Lie, O Lord, within Your Care

# LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY—THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

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Jesus appears in glory as the Son of God. The Epiphany season is bookended by the voice of God the Father proclaiming Jesus his Son. Before he suffered as man’s substitute, Jesus gave his Church a glimpse of the glory that he set aside to be our Savior. See how much he loves us! The God of Mt. Sinai, the Majestic Glory, became a man to suffer and die for us, just as Moses and the Prophets had foretold. It’s good that we are here.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 17:1-9	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Exodus 24:12, 15-18	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Peter 1:16-21	
<i>Psalm</i>	148	110
<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: MATTHEW 17:1-9

Six days earlier, Peter had his moment of great triumph and great failure. After witnessing the ministry and miracles of Jesus, his mouth confessed what his heart believed: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. But his great failure of faith came immediately thereafter when he wanted no part with a crucified Christ. Six days later, God gave him proof for what his faith confessed, and hope in the face of what his heart feared. God showed Peter, James, and John all the glory that belonged to the Son of God shining out in the person of Jesus. They heard God the Father testify that this was his own Son. They understood that Jesus’ death and departure were a fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of God. As Peter said, it is good for us to be on this mountain and see this Jesus, because it prepares us for Lent, and it prepares us for life. We have seen his glory, so we know he goes to his suffering and death willingly, lovingly, to be our Savior. We have seen his glory, so we know that no matter the sorrow or darkness we face in this life, we have been bought for another life in the kingdom of glory with our Lord.

## FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 24:12, 15-18

How different Mt. Sinai was from the Mount of Glory! Moses entered into thick darkness (Exodus 20:21) to receive the Law of God and the two-sided covenant for Israel. When he came down from the mountain and

found Israel dancing before a golden calf, he could see how man would never be able to keep this Law. Yet on the Mount of Glory in the midst of a bright cloud, Moses saw God’s new covenant in the person of Jesus Christ. Here was the Man who would not just keep the covenant, but who would be the covenant for all mankind. On Mt. Sinai, the people cowered in fear at the glory of God which looked like a consuming fire. But on the Mount of Glory, that same glory looked like a man—a man who touched his disciples and gave them the message of the covenant fulfilled, “Don’t be afraid!”

**SECOND LESSON: 2 PETER 1:16-21**

“We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” Only two remained, since Herod had killed James years earlier. But for Peter and John, that day on the sacred mountain continued to shape their lives. From John 1 to 2 Peter, these men who had seen Christ’s glory testified that the man Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. Peter promised that the Lord Jesus Christ would come again in power, and he offers us a three-fold assurance of his reliability: Peter was an eyewitness of the glory of Christ; Peter heard the Majestic Glory call Jesus the Son of God; Peter had the word of the prophets which were inspired by the Spirit and fulfilled in Christ.

**NOTE:**

*Transfiguration is a distinctly Lutheran addition to the Christian calendar. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Johannes Bugenhagen and Veit Dietrich placed the celebration at the end of Epiphany before Lent, remembering that Jesus descended the Mount of Glory and set his face toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51).*

*On Transfiguration, the Church says “farewell” to alleluias. The Church refrains from using her most jubilant words of praise during the muted celebration of Lent. The alleluias will return with the risen Lord at the celebration of Easter.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

97 Down from the Mount of Glory

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

9 Jesus, Your Church with Longing Eyes  
 25 The King Shall Come  
 79 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star  
 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  
 242 Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices  
 256 How Great Thou Art

280 Thy Strong Word  
 291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word  
 332 Go, My Children, with My Blessing  
 350 All Praise Be Yours  
 369 Beautiful Savior  
 370 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name  
 705 The Night Will Soon Be Ending  
 712 Jesus, Take Us to the Mountain  
 741 Take and Eat  
 746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd

# LENT

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## The Season

The season of Lent leads the Church on a forty-day journey of repentance and prayer, of remembrance and renewal of our baptism. God calls to mankind: Return to the Lord! The journey begins with Ash Wednesday's warning of mortality and culminates at the Service of Holy Baptism in the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.

Many congregations that gather for midweek Lenten services meditate on the Passion of our Lord for the six weeks of Lent. The season of Lent, however, does not always need to be an extended treatment of Holy Week. If the whole season of Lent becomes a meditation on the suffering and death of Christ, the following warning should be heeded:

[Meditation on the Passion] throughout the entire season of Lent restricts thought to contemplation of the sufferings and death of our Lord, to the exclusion of practically all other ideas. By the time Holy Week is reached, the mind of the church has been so saturated with morbidity that pastors and people find it wearisome and unrewarding to repeat the same lugubrious details. Lent should prepare us for Easter, not for Good Friday. (Luther Reed)

For many years the six weeks of Lent served the Church as the culmination of the catechumenate's instruction. Many congregations, therefore, have used the weeks of Lent as times to study the chief doctrines of the Church as a basis for repentance and renewal of faith.

The focus of the season is not Good Friday, but Easter. As an alternative to a six week Passion emphasis, consider using the midweek services to prepare for Easter through the study of the chief parts of the catechism and keep the extended treatment of the Passion for Holy Week services.

## The Sundays

The Church's Lenten worship is muted and quiet. For centuries, the Church has omitted her most jubilant songs of praise during this season of repentance. Worship planners may omit the use of "Alleluia" until Easter. The Song of Praise may also be omitted to reflect the somber nature of the season. Note, however, that the Sundays are designated as Sunday in Lent, not Sundays of Lent. The Sundays themselves are not considered part of the forty days, but are islands of refreshment in our Lenten walk.

## The Lessons

Consider each Sunday's focus and progression. Notice the hope and refreshment they offer to Christians walking toward Good Friday and Easter Sunday:

- Lent 1: Jesus defeated the devil for us
- Lent 2: Jesus is the gift of God for all nations by faith
- Lent 3: Jesus is the light of the world who brings sight for the blind and judgment to the blinded
- Lent 4: Jesus calls us from sinful selfishness to selfless service
- Lent 5: Jesus will raise us from death to life
- Lent 6: Hail the King who humbly comes to save us!

Here is refreshment for the Lenten journey: Your Savior has defeated the devil for you. The promise comes by faith and is meant for all people. Though you were born in the blindness of sin, the light of the world shines upon you and lets you see. New life in the light of Christ leads you to selfless service until the day he makes good

on his greatest promise—the resurrection. What can we say in response to love so great? Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hail him!

Throughout the season of Lent, the Second Lesson features words from St. Paul that give commentary and exposition on the themes of the First Lesson. There are no *lectio continua* readings during Lent; rather, the lessons are tightly thematic. As such there are no supplemental second lessons offered. The supplemental First Lessons either expand the Sunday’s theme or use Old Testament narratives to convey the point of the traditional first lesson.

### Minor Festivals

March 19	St. Joseph
March 25	The Annunciation of our Lord

The minor festivals in Lent celebrate the coming of Christ in the flesh for his saving work. The angel announced the arrival of the Hope of the ages. Scripture records the Virgin’s humble faith. God commends his Son’s safety into the hands of his earthly caregiver. Through his mother Mary and through Joseph, God cared for his Son during the first years of his sojourn among us. Their care and faithfulness found fulfillment when Christ began his walk to the sacrifice of Calvary and the victory of the tomb.

# ASH WEDNESDAY

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Return to the Lord! Ash Wednesday calls us to a forty-day journey of repentance and renewal. The ashes upon our heads testify: Man, you are mortal; prepare to meet your God! Recognition of our sin leads us to cry for mercy and trust in God’s promised forgiveness. Note the sweet Gospel phrases that dominate the thought of every part of the Propers. Return to the Lord, for he is gracious. Having obtained his pardon, we seek a renewal of our faith and life that we might live as baptized children of God.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 18:9-14	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 59:12-20	Numbers 21:4-9
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:2	2 Corinthians 7:8-13a
<i>Psalm</i>	51a	32
<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.

*Note: This 1549 prayer of the English reformers displays remarkable beauty and balance. The Church may use this prayer after the Prayer of the Day throughout the Lenten Season until Palm Sunday. Christians may use it daily in personal Lenten devotions.*

## 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)

## THE GOSPEL: LUKE 18:9-14

The Lenten call to repentance and renewal begins by addressing the sin in man. Sin drives a man to two extremes: pride and despair. The tax collector had to wear his sin in society like a scarlet letter. The Pharisee hid his guilt beneath a veneer of righteousness. Which man has more to teach us? We have a such high opinion of our own righteousness! We may fool our friends; we may even fool our family. But the ashes on our head remind us that we will meet God, and he is not fooled by our shined-up exterior. He can see the depravity and decay within. The man who understands this beats his breast and cries, *Kyrie eleison!* That man returns to the Lord and finds justification in Christ, pardon from his forgiving God, and real righteousness.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 59:12-20

Returning to the Lord means understanding the depth of our sinfulness and the multitude of our offenses. It means despairing of our own worth or ability and recognizing that we have all together become corrupt. Our

offenses are ever with us, so God himself worked the salvation we could not; he provided the righteousness we failed to give. The call to repentance reminds us that the Lord is coming again, clothed in righteousness and salvation, but also in vengeance and zeal. He comes to repay his enemies according to what they have done (v 18), but for the repentant, he repays them according to what *he* has done (v 16). Return to the Lord, and your Redeemer will come!

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

In order to reconcile us to himself, God acted. *I* heard you. *I* helped you. God made the Sinless sinful that sinners might be made righteous. At the beginning of our Lenten walk, Paul reminds us the solution for sin is found in the Savior. Return to God because now is the time of God’s favor. He worked the Great Exchange that we might be reconciled *to* God *by* God. Return to the Lord, the God of grace and mercy and love!

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: NUMBERS 21:4-9**

Only sin can turn a gift as gracious as manna into something detestable. Only sin could lead a people to speak against the God who had worked such mighty miracles for them. So God worked another miracle—one meant to cause the people to return to him. The venomous bites of the snakes brought God’s people to their knees in repentance, and God quickly offered pardon and safety with a type of Christ. Notice that the people asked that God remove the snakes, but the snakes stayed. The Lord chastises those he loves. Notice, too, that this is the last complaint of God’s people until they entered the Promised Land!

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:8-13A**

God wants us to have godly sorrow over sin that leads to salvation. Godly sorrow brings repentance, not regret. Worldly sorrow leads only to regret that binds and imprisons us in our past sins. Godly sorrow leads to repentance that opens the prison doors and sets us free from the past, free to return to God, free to sin no more.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

396 In Adam We Have All Been One

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 124 Savior, When in Dust to You         | 376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness   |
| 125 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross    | 377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice |
| 138 Oh, Perfect Life of Love            | 383 Blessed Are They, Forever Blest       |
| 254 The Day Full of Grace               | 398 Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults  |
| 266 Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above   | 401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ        |
| 268 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy          | 450 God, My Lord, My Strength             |
| 302 Lord, to You I Make Confession      | 534 In the Midst of Earthly Life          |
| 303 With Broken Heart and Contrite Sigh | 565 There Still Is Room                   |
| 304 Jesus Sinners Does Receive          | 713 In Silent Pain the Eternal Son        |
| 305 From Depths of Woe I Cry to You     | 738 In Hopelessness and Near Despair      |
| 306 Before You, God, the Judge of All   | 739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me             |
| 317 O Lord, We Praise You               |   |



# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

---

The Son of God goes forth to war and defeats the devil for us. The Prayer of the Day sets the tone for the Sunday: the ancient foe warred on mankind in the garden, but God promised to send a champion to battle on our behalf. The Second Adam came to do what the first could not, and in the desert the battle was joined. *But for us fights the valiant one whom God himself elected...he holds the field forever* (Hymn of the Day).

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 4:1-11	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7	Genesis 3:1-15
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 5:12-19	
<i>Psalm</i>	130	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 deceits 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: MATTHEW 4:1-11

The Second Adam goes to war to regain all that the first Adam had lost. Empowered by his baptism and led by the Spirit, Jesus defeats the devil for us. Let the preacher note that this pericope is not a “how-to” guide for Christians to fight temptation. The point, rather, is that Jesus fought as the champion of mankind by walking to the cross in obedience to his Father’s plan. Satan tempted Christ to use the greatest weapons at his disposal—miracle, mystery and authority—to shortcut this mission (Dostoyevsky). He tempted the Son to have a distrustful Sonship, a presumptive Sonship, a disloyal Sonship (F. Lindemann). Satan would have had his way with us, but not with our champion! Jesus won this and every battle with the devil, and now one little word can fell him.

## FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7

God had placed Adam into a perfect world and called on him to worship the Lord his God and serve him only. But Adam did not. He worshipped himself and ate the forbidden fruit, and so plunged the world into an age of darkness and death. Before that day, man’s destiny had been life eternal with God in glory, but death came rushing in the vacuum left behind when holiness and peace vanished. Everything changed that day that Adam fell. But God looked down at these children that he created, and like the parent of a wayward child, he loved them in spite of themselves. God loved them and us and wanted us to live again—to live the way he had intended—with life and light and peace. So God made a promise: What you could not do, I will

do in your place. Because man could not live perfectly and serve God faithfully, God promised to one day become a man to do it in our place. Thousands of years later God made good on his promise in the womb of the Virgin. He became man with one mission: to right what was wrong, to do what we had left undone. God became man to do what man could not.

**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 5:12-19**

Paul provides a New Testament commentary on the First Lesson and shows the universal effects of the First Adam’s failure and the Second Adam’s victory. Adam was a son of God in human flesh (Luke 3:38), but Adam failed the tests of his sonship. Through his flesh he passed his failure on to all of his children, condemning us to sin and death. So God sent another Son in human flesh to be the Son that Adam had not been. He obeyed where Adam did not. The obedience of the second Adam had as wide an effect as the disobedience of the first: he gives his victory to us and declares us righteous and brings life for all.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 3:1-15**

The supplemental reading omits the context of Creation before the Fall, but provides an expanded treatment of the results of sin. Most importantly, for this Sunday, it includes the *protoevangelium* where God promises to send the Seed of Woman as the champion of mankind in the battle against Satan. Inherent in the promise was the cost: though the victory was certain, so was the sacrifice!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

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

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 106 Come to Calvary’s Holy Mountain    | 403 I Know My Faith Is Founded            |
| 121 Jesus, Grant that Balm and Healing | 447 Who Trusts in God, a Strong Abode     |
| 192 Triune God, Oh, Be Our Stay        | 455 Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You |
| 202 If God Had Not Been on Our Side    | 541 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide      |
| 204 O God, Our Lord, Your Holy Word    | 556 Rise, Shine, You People               |
| 287 The Law of God Is Good and Wise    | 585 While Yet the Morn Is Breaking        |
| 305 From Depths of Woe I Cry to You    | 587 Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadow       |
| 349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure          | 593 Now the Light Has Gone Away           |
| 371 Oh, Love, How Deep                 | 726 Christ, the Lord of Hosts, Unshaken   |
| 378 All Mankind Fell in Adam’s Fall    | 754 The Tree of Life                      |
| 396 In Adam We Have All Been One       | 781 I Lie, O Lord, within Your Care       |

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

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The gift of God comes by faith to all nations. Not a holy life, not acts of obedience, but simple trust in the promise of God brings the gift of living water for thirsty souls. Abraham believed God’s promise and so became not only the father of a nation, but the forefather of the Promised Seed who would bless all peoples. He had faith in God who justifies the wicked, and so God credited it to him as righteousness. By this same faith, Christ gives righteousness to all who believe and enfolds sinful Samaritans and modern Gentiles like us into the family of God.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 4:5-26	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Genesis 12:1-8	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 4:1-5, 13-17	
<i>Psalm</i>	121	
<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)

### THE GOSPEL: JOHN 4:5-26

He defied popular convention by traveling through Samaria. He defied religious convention by asking a Samaritan woman for a drink. Why would Jesus even bother with this woman? She was a Samaritan and a habitual adulterer. Yet he had to be here (John 4:4), not because of convention or expectations but because of his mission to save all people. He had come to save the world, and that meant he had come for this woman, too. Not because she had lived a holy life—far from it! Only because of his grace. He used the mirror of the Law to incite within her a thirst for mercy that could only be sated by the living water of grace. A Samaritan...a sinner...and yet Jesus opens the flood gates of the water of life and reveals his true identity as the Promised Seed, the Anointed One, her Savior. He calls her to faith, and she believes and finds living water for her thirsty soul.

### FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 12:1-8

God’s plan of salvation called for one special nation which would carry the Promise of the Seed meant for all people. From the beginning, this nation would be built on faith in the promises of God. God told Abram to leave all he knew and go to a place yet unknown and wait for blessings as yet undefined. God revealed that the Seed of woman promised in the garden would now descend from the family of an old man and his

barren wife living as strangers in a land not yet their own. No logic or emotion could have led Abram to leave his home—only trust in his Savior God. Abram believed and set God’s plan in motion to build a nation on the promises of God to fulfill the promises of God. All people would be blessed by the nation descended from Abram, because this man of faith would bear the bloodline of the Promised Seed, the Messiah who would come as Savior of all nations.

#### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 4:1-5, 13-17**

Paul taught the Romans about faith by using Abraham as an example. Faith is simply receiving the grace of God by trusting in his promises. This God credits to us as righteousness. Abraham’s righteousness did not come by doing but by believing. What did Abraham do? Nothing! God did it all: He made the promises; he gave the inheritance; he gave the child, the blessing for all nations. Abraham merely received the promises of God by believing that the One who made the promises was faithful. And then what happened? God acted again and credited this faith to Abraham as righteousness. This is the righteousness that every person needs to stand in God’s presence. This is the righteousness that the sinful woman at the well, and even faithful Abraham lacked. This is the righteousness God gives. We are people like Abraham, who believe that God justifies the wicked. And so God forgives our wickedness and calls us righteous—no, even more—he gives us righteousness in the place of our wickedness. This is the living water that slakes the thirst of every believing soul.

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

391 God Loved the World So that He Gave

#### **ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

28 Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord

106 Come to Calvary’s Holy Mountain

283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening

286 The Law Commands and Makes Us Know

287 The Law of God Is Good and Wise

289 Preserve Your Word, O Savior

309 Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord

337 Delay Not! Delay Not

338 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

357 Jesus, Lover of My Soul

380 Lord, ’Tis Not that I Did Choose You

395 Seek Where You May to Find a Way

404 Faith Is a Living Power from Heaven

529 Built on the Rock

740 Draw Near

750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate

# THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

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The light of the world brings sight to the blind and judgment to the blinded. Faith means seeing Jesus as Savior: like the bronze serpent, we look on him and live (Verse of the Day). We were born in the blindness of sin, and without the light of Christ we could not find a way to safety. Christ comes to shine his light into our darkened eyes that we might see him and live. Yet for those who refuse to see their Savior in Christ, the blindness of unbelief remains. He gives gracious sight to the blind who trust in him; he gives blinding judgment on those who reject him; finally, he displays the work of God in the lives of those who now walk in the light of Christ.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 42:14-21	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 5:8-14	
<i>Psalm</i>	143	
<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 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39

In God's plan there are no coincidences, and there is no karma. The man was born blind not because of his parents' sin; nor was the man lying in Jesus' path by accident. Both happened that the work of God might be displayed in the life of this man who was doubly blind: he could not see Jesus physically or spiritually. Christ opened the door to the latter by solving the former. It was no coincidence that this happened on the Sabbath. Christ had come not only to give sight to the helplessly blind—he also came to bring judgment on the Pharisees who should have seen him as the Messiah, but who refused to believe even what they saw with their own eyes. Yet for us, born in the blindness of sin, but looking to Christ as Savior, Jesus shines as the light of the world. We believe, and we worship him.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 42:14-21

In the Gospel we saw two kinds of blindness. One cannot see a way to salvation; the other sees the Way, but rejects him. Here, the Lord makes promises to both groups. To his helplessly blind children who cannot find a way out, he promises certain deliverance and rescue. God himself will lead them to safety and will turn their darkness into light. But to those who reject the true God and look to idols, God promises judgment!

Like the Pharisees in the Gospel, God promises that though they see, they remain spiritually blind—though they hear, they remain spiritually deaf.

### SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 5:8-14

Notice what Paul says. He does not say that once we were in the dark and now we are in the light. No, once we *were* darkness and now we *are* light. Our conversion meant a total transformation of what we are, and therefore, it will lead to a total transformation of what we do. No longer producing fruits of darkness, we live in the light and shine the light into the sin-darkened corners of our world. With lines from an early Christian hymn, Paul shares Christ’s call to us and his promise for us. Once you were darkness, but now you are light. Live as children of the light. The difference between darkness and light is dramatic. The difference between believers and unbelievers should be equally so. They are as different as the nursery and the morgue!

### HYMN OF THE DAY

343 Christ Is the World’s Light

### ADDITIONAL HYMNS

33 All Praise to You, Eternal God

221 Blessed Jesus, at Your Word

254 The Day Full Of Grace

321 Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name

338 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

362 Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest

367 Christ Be My Leader

373 O Jesus, King Most Wonderful

379 Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound

397 Just As I Am, without One Plea

420 God Moves in a Mysterious Way

460 How Can I Thank You, Lord

520 Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old

560 I Hear the Savior Calling

569 O Christ, Our True and Only Light

577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations

771 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

774 Church of God, Elect and Glorious

# FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

---

Jesus calls us from sinful selfishness to selfless service. We can view the world from the perspective of selfishness or selflessness. Selfishness puts self before all and leads to favoritism, pride and envy. Repentance, however, means despairing of self, trusting in Christ's substitutionary sacrifice and leading lives of selfless service modeled after our Savior who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for us.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 20:17-28	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Hosea 5:15—6:3	Genesis 37:1-11
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 8:1-10	
<i>Psalm</i>	42-43	
<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: MATTHEW 20:17-28

Jesus revealed the plan of the Father to his disciples: the Son of God would leave his heavenly throne and selflessly give his freedom to his enemies, his body to the torturer, his life to the executioner in order that he might be our Savior. Rather than marveling at the depth of his love and self-sacrifice, the disciples argued about places of greatness in glory. The sons of Zebedee wanted to sit at the right and left of Jesus, but were only promised that they would join in drinking his cup. The other disciples were indignant, but not righteously so. Jesus corrected them, too. Followers of Jesus drink his cup and find greatness in selflessly serving others. For our motivation and our model, Christ points back to God's plan for the Son of Man who came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

## FIRST LESSON: HOSEA 5:15—6:3

Let the preacher consider the context of this lesson carefully. True repentance and selfless service are about more than saying the right words. On their face, this confession of Israel is beautiful, but at its heart it is empty. This is unrepentant Israel's kind of "repentance." The words sound nice, but there is no confession of guilt, God doesn't receive it, and fruits don't follow. This is a selfish "repentance" that is, in fact, merely made out of self-interest. True repentance leads to confession, trust, and fruits of selfless service that were absent in Israel (see 6:4-6).

**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:1-10**

One of Scripture’s greatest chapters begins with one of its sweetest verses: Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Christ’s life ransomed mankind because it met God’s demands and set us free from the Law of sin. Now we are free to live according to the Spirit. The sinful nature wants us to live in selfishness; the Spirit sets us free to live lives of selfless service to God and neighbor. Sinners that we are, the requirements of the Law could never be fully met *by* us, but now they are fully met *in* us through the indwelling of the Spirit and Christ.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 37:1-11**

The life of Joseph illustrates Jesus’ message that whoever wants to be first must be your slave. Selfishness led to Jacob’s favoritism and his sons’ jealousy. Selfishness led Jacob and his sons to such pride that they could not imagine God’s prophecy about Joseph coming true. Their selfishness forced Joseph into the role of slave and servant, yet God in his grace would save many people in spite of their sin. Sold into slavery, and jailed unjustly, Joseph would trust in God and selflessly serve his fellow man. Ultimately, God brought the prideful low and raised up humble Joseph. In doing so, He both fulfilled his prophecy and also saved the family of God and countless others.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

- 437 I Trust, O Christ, in You Alone
- 486 Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 8 Come, O Precious Ransom, Come         | 377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice      |
| 41 Let All Together Praise Our God      | 386 Now I Have Found the Firm Foundation       |
| 102 Enslaved by Sin and Bound in Chains | 401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ             |
| 104 Go to Dark Gethsemane               | 484 Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly           |
| 113 Upon the Cross Extended             | 492 Son of God, Eternal Savior                 |
| 115 He Stood before the Court           | 518 Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go         |
| 126 Lord Jesus, You Are Going Forth     | 525 The Son of God, Our Christ                 |
| 181 Come, Oh, Come, Life-Giving Spirit  | 711 Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure Eternal |
| 194 Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices    | 738 In Hopelessness and Near Despair           |
| 207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near      | 739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me                  |
| 302 Lord, to You I Make Confession      | 741 Take and Eat                               |
| 350 All Praise Be Yours                 | 754 The Tree of Life                           |
| 376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness |  |



# FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

---

Jesus will raise us from death to life. The crown jewel of the coming kingdom is the resurrection of the dead. One day, Jesus will defeat the last enemy (1 Corinthians 15:27) and life will reign again in our new Eden with God. On our Lenten walk to Calvary, the Church sees the Savior come face to face with death and defeat it completely. During our Lenten walk, the Prayer of the Day asks God to help us remember that Jesus, who is resurrection and life, has made us heirs of eternal life.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 11:17-27, 38-45	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Ezekiel 37:1-14	2 Kings 4:18-37
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 8:11-19	
<i>Psalm</i>	116	
<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)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 11:17-27, 38-45

Jesus performed the greatest miracle of his ministry to prove to us the certainty of his greatest promise. Death has hounded mankind since the garden and caused misery that God never intended for his children. When Christ saw the effects of death on his loved ones, he wept with them, but also promised them that one day even this last enemy would be defeated. Martha, too often remembered for her busyness, should be remembered for her confession of faith—so complete, so noble—that encompassed everything Jesus had preached. It even encompassed teachings the disciples struggled to comprehend! She believed in Jesus' promise of a future resurrection, and so Jesus gave proof to her and to us that his promise is true. By that same faith, he will give to us the crown jewel of the kingdom. The one who *is* resurrection and life will also *give* resurrection and life to all who believe. Jesus' victory in this battle with death was a forgone conclusion: he thanked God for it in advance. But Lazarus' response to the command of Christ stirs the heart of every Christian who has stared at the ugly face of death: the dead man came out.

## FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 37:1-14

Israel in exile was as good as dead. Cut off and helpless, the Israelites were not like an army but like a valley full of bones. Yet God promises to bring this nation back to life. In raising Israel from the death of exile, God

foreshadowed the great work of Christ: the resurrection of God’s people from the dead. Here he speaks to a figuratively dead nation; one day he will speak it literally: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them. The crown jewel of the kingdom will be given to all who believe—to all who have the Spirit. Reminiscent of the Spirit’s first life-giving act on Adam will be the Life-giver’s ultimate act on us. God says: I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live.

#### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:11-19**

The indwelling of the Spirit proves our possession of the crown jewel of the kingdom, the resurrection from the dead. If the Spirit is in us, God will most certainly grant true and real life to our mortal bodies. The truth of the protasis in verse 11 is evidenced by our lives. When the Spirit works fruits in our life, he proves to us that he dwells within us. If the protasis is true, then the apodosis is equally true: God will give us life. The knowledge of our future glory lets us approach God without fear and bear suffering as children of God and coheirs with Christ.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 2 KINGS 4:18-37**

The story is heartbreaking: a barren woman gives birth to a promised child. All her hopes and love wrapped themselves up in this little boy, until the day his head hurt. He died in his mother’s lap while she rocked him. Can you imagine the tears? Death is the bitter lot we inherited from Adam. But God wants us to know that even in the face of a death as heartrending as this, he promises that whoever believes in him will live, even though he dies. So he lets Elisha pay an advance on the inheritance waiting for the coheirs of Christ, that we might know and believe that Jesus one day will raise us from death to life.

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

110 My Song Is Love Unknown

#### **ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

99 Oh, Come, My Soul  
 104 Go to Dark Gethsemane  
 116 In the Hour of Trial  
 120 What Wondrous Love Is This  
 121 Jesus, Grant that Balm and Healing  
 158 I Am Content! My Jesus Lives Again  
 167 Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense  
 170 Draw Us to Thee  
 181 Come, Oh, Come, Life-Giving Spirit  
 189 Jehovah, Let Me Now Adore You  
 211 I Know of a Sleep in Jesus’ Name  
 214 Jerusalem the Golden  
 226 To Your Temple I Draw Near  
 236 All Praise to God Who Reigns Above  
 388 Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven

392 Not unto Us  
 398 Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults  
 400 O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth  
 425 Oh, Sing, My Soul, Your Maker’s Praise  
 434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart  
 452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus  
 454 I Gave My Life for Thee  
 460 How Can I Thank You, Lord  
 465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken  
 607 How Blest Are They  
 608 I Fall Asleep in Jesus’ Wounds  
 728 Jerusalem the Golden  
 737 God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It  
 750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate

# SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT—PALM SUNDAY

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Hail the King who humbly comes to save us! For 1700 years the Church has celebrated with Hosannas and palm branches this festival that opens Holy Week. The time for Christ's glory had come (Verse of the Day). He would not, however, gain glory in the manner of other kings. Rather, he would humble himself in great acts of love for us, and then the Father would exalt him to the highest place, because he had fulfilled God's mission to save mankind.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 21:1-11	
<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)

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 21:1-11

The great King comes to his city and to his temple! He could have come with all the power and glory of the Son of God. He could have ridden a thunderstorm as his chariot with legions of angels striding beside him and creation itself singing forth the praise of its Maker. But look how he comes: Not on the storm, but on a donkey; not accompanied by heavenly warriors, but by fishermen with a spotty record of faith; not to the sound of creation singing, but to the shouts of fickle pilgrims who cheered him on Sunday but would desert him by Friday. Why did he come so humbly? Because he came not to rule us, but to save us. He came, not to command us, but to invite us. He came not to demand anything from us, but to give everything for us. He comes in the name of the Lord to save us. Hail him!

## FIRST LESSON: ZECHARIAH 9:9, 10

Zechariah tells Jerusalem to rejoice when the messianic King comes to her, because he will have with him the righteousness she needs and the salvation she craves. This King would surpass the glory and power of all Israel's kings before him. King David's rule extended to the River Euphrates at its farthest—but this King's rule would extend from the Euphrates to the very ends of the earth, from sea to sea. His worldwide kingdom would mean the end of war and the advent of peace. All this he would do not with an army, but with his person—not with violence, but with gentleness. Rejoice, daughter of Zion! Your King comes to you. Hail him!

**SECOND LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11**

Jesus is our King, but he came humbly to save us. Though true God, he became man. Though all powerful, he became a servant. Though immortal and eternal, he died. He not only laid aside his glory, but he took our shame upon him. He not only humbled himself, but he died as one who was cursed. Yet in this great humility, he won the peace of forgiveness for us. The King came humbly because he wasn't on the way to a throne in Jerusalem, but to a hill called Golgotha where he would fulfill God's mission and save his people. Therefore, God would give him glory greater than his humiliation—every creature will bow the knee and hail him: Jesus Christ is Lord!

**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

3 Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates

4 Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates

8 Come, O Precious Ransom, Come

18 O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

19 O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

21 Hosanna to the Coming Lord

29 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

30 Rise, Arise

110 My Song Is Love Unknown

130 Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

131 All Glory, Laud, and Honor

134 O Bride of Christ, Rejoice

230 Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now

251 When Morning Gilds the Skies

344 At the Name of Jesus

350 All Praise Be Yours

363 The King of Glory Comes

370 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

371 Oh, Love, How Deep

540 Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng

550 Behold a Host, Arrayed in White

701 Zion, at Your Shining Gates

702 Prepare the Royal Highway

704 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

706 A Stable Lamp is Lighted

716 No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet

747 There is a Redeemer

# MAUNDY THURSDAY

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Christ shows us the full extent of God’s love for us. The Church calls this day *Maundy* because of Jesus’ new command in the Gospel that his followers love one another (it is the *dies mandati*). The Year B lessons focus on the fulfillment of the Passover, and the Year C lessons on the fulfillment of the New Covenant. The Year A lessons, however, focus on Christ’s command for humility and love. Christ shows the full extent of his love in both service and sacrifice. He loves us more than life and feeds us his flesh and blood to prove it. Reconciled to God through the flesh and blood of Christ, we follow his command to love each other.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 13:1-15, 34	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Exodus 12:1-14	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 11:23-28	
<i>Psalm</i>	116	115
<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)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 13:1-15, 34

The washing should have been done before the meal, but the disciples had been arguing about greatness, so no one was willing to condescend to fill this servant’s role—except for Jesus. Jesus had come to love them to the end (εἰς τέλος). Thirty-one times during the course of the night, Jesus mentioned “love.” Nothing spoke more clearly, though, than his acts of service and sacrifice. Peter, for his part, didn’t want a Messiah who washed people’s feet. However, he hadn’t even begun to see the extent of Jesus’ love! Jesus had not come to merely wash dirt from feet, but sin from hearts! He had come to cleanse by carrying not only a servant’s bowl, but the curse of the cross! There, on Golgotha—there, on the altar of the Sacrament—we see the fullness of his service. There we see the fullness of his sacrifice. There we see the full extent of his love for us. Then we hear his new, his distinctly different command (ἐντολήν καινήν): Just as Christ loved us with service and sacrifice, so he commands us to love one another.

## FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 12:1-14

During twilight on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, 1500 years before Christ, lambs were slaughtered, doorposts were painted, and God’s people waited to see the full extent of God’s love. God had promised a plague of death

on the firstborn sons of unbelievers, but deliverance for all who were covered by the blood of the Passover lamb. The first Passover, however, was just the beginning. God’s people saw the full extent of his love 1500 years later, in the twilight hours of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, when God’s Son showed himself as the Lamb of God sacrificed for us. The firstborn sons of Israel were saved because God’s only begotten Son was sacrificed.

### SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-28

Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper on the night he was betrayed—not afterward. He gave his disciples a sacrament that proclaimed his death—before it even happened. See the extent of the love of Christ: He gave them his body and blood sacrificed for sin, before it had been done! He had come to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and nothing would stop his mission. Indeed, he was the Lamb slain from the creation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

In order to save mankind, God needed to provide a Savior who could live under the law for us and die in our place. That meant God had to become one of us—he had to become human. So God took on flesh and blood that he might be our Savior. From the Garden of Eden onward, the solution for sin was to be the flesh and blood of God. Now, in this sacrament, he shows us the full extent of his love for us. He gives us the flesh and blood of God, the solution for sin. He gives it to us to eat and drink, to be part and parcel of our being, to feed and nourish us until he takes us out of this house of bondage to the Promised Land.

### HYMN OF THE DAY

313 Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

### ADDITIONAL HYMNS

5 As Angels Joyed with One Accord

101 Behold the Lamb of God

135 The Death of Jesus Christ, Our Lord

136 ’Twas on that Dark, that Doleful Night

210 Who Knows When Death

231 Now the Silence

268 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy

309 Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord

310 I Come, O Savior, to Your Table

311 Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness

312 Lord Jesus Christ, You Have Prepared

315 Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face

316 O Jesus, Blessed Lord, to Thee

317 O Lord, We Praise You

326 May the Grace of Christ Our Savior

361 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

406 This Is the Threefold Truth

717 When You Woke that Thursday Morning

740 Draw Near

741 Take and Eat

742 What Is This Bread

743 O Gracious Lord, I Firmly Am Believing

744 You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

# GOOD FRIDAY

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Darkness descended on the world that day as God draped Creation in the darkness of mourning. For the Light of the world was flickering out; the great Prince of the heavenly kingdom was dying. Though guiltless, he was tortured and cursed; though innocent, he died among criminals. Who could ever call this day “good?” Only those who know the truth of the cross: *Sing my tongue the glorious battle; sing the ending of the fray. Now above the cross, the trophy, sound the loud triumphant lay. Tell how Christ, the world’s Redeemer, as a victim won the day.* – Venantius Fortunatus (†609 AD), *CW 122*.

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

Scripture records the greatest event in history with a shocking paucity of words: “Here they crucified him.” Here was the culmination of God’s plan since the Garden: the innocent for the guilty, the sinless for the sinful. The participants in this divine act are carried along fulfilling prophecy after prophecy. Pilate with his sign, soldiers with their lots, hyssop and vinegar. They are all just one drumbeat after another, sounding the cadence of Christ’s advance in the battle for mankind. He fulfilled every promise that Scripture made. He fulfilled every act of righteousness that we needed. He suffered every bit of judgment we deserved. And when it was all fulfilled, when there was nothing left for him to do, he cried, “It is finished!” It was God’s plan; it was Christ’s mission; it was our salvation, and now it was accomplished. As he died, he won. Every thorn in his crown was becoming a shining jewel in his diadem of glory. The nails in his hands were being forged into the scepter of a king, and his wounds were clothing him with the purple of empire. (Kretzmann) He won! And all things are now made new. Humanity is redeemed, and from that moment on, the eternal fate of all men of all ages would be determined by the cross.

**FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 52:13—53:12**

The Messiah would come as an ordinary man—but would suffer extraordinary punishment. This Man of Sorrows had done nothing wrong. Yet when we look at what happened on Good Friday, we considered him stricken by God and afflicted. It offends our sense of justice. It makes no sense that the innocent should suffer like this. It makes no sense that the Son of God would cry that his Father had forsaken him. What punishment ever brings peace? What wounds ever bring healing? Yet, it was God’s will to crush him, because God made him to be a guilt offering (חֲטָאָה)—the offering God prescribed when sin needed to be atoned, and restitution was possible. On Good Friday we see the fulfillment of every guilt offering. Restitution was possible, but it would be very costly. Only one thing could restore the holiness Man had lost and pay the ransom price necessary: Christ’s holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. It is true that he deserved none of this. Yet—in a divine and holy paradox—he did. He deserved it all. Because Christ picked up our transgressions and carried our iniquities. God laid on him the sin of the world. And so, when the Messiah hung on the cross, he suffered there as the world’s biggest sinner—as the world’s only sinner. God made the Sinless One to be sin for us, and the punishment that brought us peace was upon him; by his wounds we are healed.

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

Here is the high priest that we need: though tempted, he was sinless; though guiltless, he died as a guilt offering. Jesus, our high priest, offered himself as the sacrificial victim (Hebrews 7:27) to win our forgiveness. Gone is the throne of judgment. Christ founded a kingdom defined by grace where even sinners like us can approach God with confidence in his mercy. Our Savior showed himself perfect and so became the source of salvation for us. This Friday most certainly is Good.

*Adoramus Te, Christe,  
et benedicimus Tibi,  
Quia per sanctam crucem  
Tuam redemisti mundum.*

We adore you, O Christ,  
And we bless you,  
For by your holy cross  
You have redeemed the world.

Francis of Assisi (†1226 AD)



**HYMN OF THE DAY**

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

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- 107 Deep Were His Wounds
- 113 Upon the Cross Extended
- 114 Christ, the Life of All the Living
- 117 O Dearest Jesus
- 119 Were You There
- 122 Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle
- 126 Lord Jesus, You Are Going Forth
- 127 Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted
- 129 Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed
- 137 Oh, Darkest Woe
- 138 Oh, Perfect Life of Love
- 139 Jesus, in Your Dying Woes
- 140 God Was There on Calvary
- 268 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy
- 302 Lord, to You I Make Confession
- 304 Jesus Sinners Does Receive
- 319 On My Heart Imprint Your Image
- 320 On My Heart Imprint Your Image
- 351 Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus
- 359 Jesus, My Great High Priest
- 372 I Lay My Sins on Jesus
- 377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice
- 387 Drawn to the Cross
- 401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ
- 413 When in the Hour of Utmost Need
- 608 I Fall Asleep in Jesus' Wounds
- 713 In Silent Pain the Eternal Son
- 714 The Lamb
- 715 What Grace Is This!
- 716 No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet
- 718 Rest, O Christ, from All Your Labor
- 746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd
- 747 There Is a Redeemer
- 748 Lamb of God
- 752 In Christ Alone

# HOLY SATURDAY

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*And sleeps my Lord in silence yet, within the darkness laid away;  
Where none remember nor forget, where breaks no more the sunlit day?  
And sleeps my Lord in silence yet, where cold His lifeless body lay?  
And does the sting of death remain to work unchanged its bitter will?  
Were cross and passion all in vain, no battle won on Calv'ry's hill?  
And does the sting of death remain, and gapes the grave in triumph still?  
Have faith in Christ, the risen Son, who reigns eternal, glorified!  
Who death destroyed, who triumph won, who flung the gates of heaven wide!  
Have faith in Christ, the risen Son, the living Lord of Eastertide!*

Timothy Dudley-Smith, 1984.

# EASTER TIDE

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## The Season

After forty days of repentance and prayer, the Church bursts forth in jubilant praise at the Resurrection of our Lord. The alleluias and glorias which were muted for Lent ring out again as the Bride of Christ welcomes her Bridegroom back from the dead. Easter is as the pinnacle of the Church Year, the oldest festival and season celebrated by the worshipping Church. For a full week-of-weeks (49 days) the Church celebrates the resurrection of Christ on the Sundays of Easter which culminate on the 50<sup>th</sup> day, Pentecost.

## The Sundays

The readings for the Sundays of Easter offer opportunities for the preacher to consider sermon series. In the First Lesson we see the advance of the Gospel as recorded in Acts. The disciples go to all nations as witnesses of the resurrection and the Spirit builds the Church. The Second Lesson features a series of five readings through the book of 1 Peter.

The themes for the Sundays are keyed to the Gospel message of the season: The Redeemer Lives!

- Easter Dawn: He lives to dry my tears and take away my fears
- Easter Festival: He lives to take me from death to life
- Easter 2: He lives to give me proof and peace
- Easter 3: He lives to restore my Hope
- Easter 4: He lives to be my Good Shepherd
- Easter 5: He lives to be the only Way to heaven
- Easter 6: He lives to call me to live for him
- Ascension: He lives to rules all things for the Church
- Easter 7: He lives to give me eager expectation of glory

## Minor Festivals

April 25	St. Mark, Evangelist
May 1	St. Philip and St. James, Apostles
May 31	The Visitation

*Congregations using a paschal candle place it next to the altar for the seven weeks of Easter. The candle burns throughout the season until it is recessed at Ascension. Thereafter, the candle is placed near the font and lit for every baptism, and placed at the head of the casket and lit for every funeral.*

# THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD: EASTER DAWN

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Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! The Church gathers at dawn and remembers the early hours of the first Easter Sunday. After three days in the tomb, Christ returned to dry our tears and remove our fears. Jesus wants no soul left in mourning over death. He laid down his life, and he took it up again. He removed the sting of death (Second Lesson) by becoming salvation for us (First Lesson), so that we can call God our Father (Gospel).

	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 or Gold	

## 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

After Good Friday, Jesus' followers were quick to believe all he had said about his crucifixion, but slow to believe any of his promises of the resurrection. In the early morning hours, the women trudged toward the tomb, expecting only to find a dead man. The sight of the empty tomb made Mary Magdalene so despondent that she left before hearing the angels' message. Peter and John raced to the tomb, but left with only the stirrings of faith. Mary stayed behind at the tomb, alone with her tears and fears. What love we see in our Savior's appearance to Mary! Though risen and glorious, he does not forget a single soul, but comes to Mary to dry her tears and take away her fears. In that one word, "Mary," every Christian hears his own name on the lips of the Savior, and in Mary's cry, "Rabboni!" we feel our own joy at the Savior who loves us like this! We do not need to cling to Jesus' feet to keep him from leaving. No, it was once for all that he died. Now he is the Living One who holds the keys of Death and Hades.

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 12:1-6

God was right to be angry with us. We deserved to be abandoned. We rightly cried and feared what our sins had done. Such righteous anger called for payment—for atonement. But here is the great reversal of Easter: God's anger is turned away, and the one who should be our judge, has become our comforter. God himself

made atonement; God became our salvation. Jesus rose from the dead to prove that payment had been made in full. The time for crying is over—both seasonally and spiritually. Jesus returned to dry our tears and take away our fears. Now we can trust and be unafraid because the Holy One of Israel is great, and he is among us as our Savior. Our joy bursts forth, unrestrained and uninterrupted, because Christ is a well that provides salvation and joy without end. This is the day of the Lord, and the Church fulfills the word of the prophet: we give thanks; we call on his name; and we proclaim to the nations what he has done.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-57**

In the realm of mortal existence, dead is dead. It is death’s finality—its irreversibility—that makes man fear it. At the grave, all the hopes and dreams of mortal man are dashed, and survivors are left with nothing but mourning and tears. But look at this...behold! Paul reveals a mystery: the dead will be raised! The body corrupted by the ground will be raised incorruptible, and the man brought low by his mortality will be raised immortal. Dead is not dead forever! Death, in fact, is not final at all! The mystery revealed is the truth that man has been longing to hear since the Garden: the dead will live. Jesus Christ is the resurrection-firstfruits from the harvest field of humanity, and that means many more will follow. Suddenly, the tomb is not a place of fear, but a place of hope. Jesus comes even to the graveside to dry our tears and remove our fears. The debt of sin is paid; the law is fulfilled. So where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

144 Christ Is Arisen

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

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  
 152 I Know that My Redeemer Lives  
 153 Alleluia! Jesus Lives  
 159 Morning Breaks upon the Tomb  
 160 This Joyful Eastertide  
 161 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands  
 168 With High Delight Let Us Unite  
 211 I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name

265 This Is the Feast of Victory  
 341 Crown Him with Many Crowns  
 446 I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus  
 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving  
 719 Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia  
 720 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands  
 722 Scatter the Darkness, Break the Gloom  
 724 Voices Raised to You We Offer  
 733 Rejoice in God  
 749 The Love of Christ, Who Died for Me  
 752 In Christ Alone  
 788 Thanks Be to God!

# THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD: EASTER DAY

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Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Sinners should fear God. Sinners ought to die for their wickedness. The grave should be the place of ultimate defeat for mankind. Yet on this day, the Second Adam did all that the first had left undone. Bearing our guilt and suffering our verdict, the Son of Man died, but three days later he rose in glory. As a result, fear is gone, mankind is redeemed, and Christ calls us his own brothers. Jesus came from death to life, and through baptism he brings us with him.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 28:1-10	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jonah 2:2-9	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Colossians 3:1-4	
<i>Psalm</i>	118	
<i>Color</i>	White or Gold	

## 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)

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 28:1-10

The women walked to the tomb, arms full of spices and hearts full of disappointment. They had come to a place of disappointment, broken promises, and fear. All they had hoped to do was anoint the body of a dead man. A dead Jesus does no good for anyone—not for the women, not for the disciples, not for us. But when the angel spoke, the tomb became a place of victory, a place of promises fulfilled, a place of joy. *Do not be afraid!* The angel spoke two amazing words, “was” and “is.” Yes, he was crucified, but no, he is not here in the grave. He is very much alive, just as he said. That fact fundamentally changes our relationship with God forever. You can see in it the words of Jesus to the women, “Go and tell my brothers.” Jesus had good reason to remind those men of their desertion. Jesus had good reason to remind them that they were nothing but servants. Instead, he took this moment to call them “my brothers” for the very first time. The living Son of God had made full payment for sin so that he could call us brothers. Mankind is redeemed; death is defeated; fear is conquered. And Christ looks upon us forgiven sinners and calls us his brothers. This is the day the Lord has made!

**FIRST LESSON: JONAH 2:2-9**

Jesus compared himself to only one Old Testament prophet: the reluctant, petulant, and chastised prophet Jonah. Why would he compare himself to Jonah? Because in his suffering and death, he took the place of sinful man who deserves nothing but judgment and death. Speaking to a wicked and rebellious generation, Jesus promised the sign of the prophet Jonah: as he was in the belly of a fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man would be in the belly of the earth. Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish finishes with the key point of his book and of Scripture: *ישועתה ליהוה* "Salvation belongs to the LORD!" God would make salvation ours, but he would do it by making Jesus just like Jonah. God punished Jesus for our rebelliousness and sent Christ to our grave. In Jonah, we see a picture of both Jesus and us. Like Jonah, Jesus was judged and sent to his death by God the Father. Like Jonah, after three days, he emerged from death to life. Like Jonah, you and I deserve nothing but death. Yet it's God's will to kill us not physically, but baptismally (Romans 6), and that a new man should arise as from the dead to live before God. Raised from death to life, we join with a forgiven Jonah in proclaiming: *ישועתה ליהוה*.

**SECOND LESSON: COLOSSIANS 3:1-4**

Through baptism, God kills our sinful nature and raises a new man to life within us. The power of baptism comes from the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So Christ's Easter is really our Easter, too. Our spiritual resurrection creates a new reality for us who are bound for glory. Though eternal life is ours through baptism, its full glory remains hidden until the day of Christ. Until then, we live as resurrected heirs waiting for our inheritance. We set our hearts and minds on the glory that is waiting for us above.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

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

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

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| 143 He's Risen, He's Risen                   | 341 Crown Him with Many Crowns               |
| 147 Like the Golden Sun Ascending            | 452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus              |
| 149 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today           | 471 Renew Me, O Eternal Light                |
| 150 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia | 528 Christ Is Our Cornerstone                |
| 152 I Know that My Redeemer Lives            | 531 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation       |
| 155 Christ the Lord Is Risen Again           | 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving        |
| 156 Awake, My Heart, with Gladness           | 719 Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia              |
| 157 Jesus Christ Is Risen Today              | 720 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands |
| 159 Morning Breaks upon the Tomb             | 722 Scatter the Darkness, Break the Gloom    |
| 161 Christ Jesus Lay In Death's Strong Bands | 743 O Gracious Lord, I Firmly Am Believing   |
| 162 He Is Arisen! Glorious Word              | 746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd    |
| 166 The Day of Resurrection                  | 749 The Love of Christ, Who Died for Me      |
| 225 This Is the Day the Lord Has Made        | 752 In Christ Alone                          |
| 265 This Is the Feast of Victory             | 788 Thanks Be to God!                        |

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

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In the face of doubt, Christ gives us proof and peace. To the doubting disciples, he gave certain proof that led to certain peace. Through his Word and sacraments, Jesus gives the same proof to all people of all time. “Peace be with you,” said our Lord. Then he sent his people forth with this message of peace based on the proof of his resurrection.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 20:19-31	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 2:14a, 22-32	Acts 10:34a, 36, 39-43
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Peter 1:3-9	
<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

Peace was one thing the disciples did not have. They had questions, concerns, and doubts. But they had no peace that Easter evening as they huddled behind locked doors. Jesus was dead—killed on a Roman cross—and now fear held them in its icy grip. They lacked more than peace of mind; the disciples also lacked any peace of spirit. Shame hung heavy on their shoulders. Grief and guilt weighed down their hearts. They had great doubts about their Lord, their lives, their salvation. But then Jesus came! In the face of all their doubts he offered proof that he was alive and sin was dead. Jesus showed them his nail-marked hands and riven side. These holy wounds are the proof positive that God is at peace with us. Thomas could be the poster child for our existential culture. No matter how many times the others told him about the resurrection, he set himself against them all. Thomas required more evidence. He must see him with his own eyes; he must touch the wounds—more than that, he must thrust his hand into Jesus’ side (cf. the coarseness of the Greek). Unless he got the evidence that he demanded, he would in no way ever believe it. What grace we see in Jesus! He comes again and repeats Thomas’ objections nearly word for word. Again, he gives the ultimate proof that he was alive, and sin was dead. Jesus gave the proof that led to peace for Thomas, peace that could only be found in his Lord and his God.



**FIRST LESSON: ACTS 2:14A, 22-32**

Jesus told Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” However, Jesus had good reason to let the disciples see him with their own eyes: they were to be his witnesses. When Peter stood before the crowds on Pentecost, we see the purpose for all the resurrection appearances of Jesus. He showed himself to them; he ate and drank with them; he let them touch his flesh and bones; he showed them his holy wounds. Jesus let them see and touch because they weren’t just looking for themselves. No, these eleven would be the witnesses of the bodily resurrection of Christ for all ages. Through the eyes of these eleven men, God gives his Church the gift of proof and the gift of peace.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 1:3-9**

What brings more doubt into our lives than grief or sorrow? “Why did this happen to me?” “How could God let my loved one die?” “When will this sickness stop?” Grief and sorrow raise doubts about God’s love and God’s plan for our lives. Peter points us to the resurrection as proof of the living hope we have regardless of our outward circumstances. We may doubt when we face trials, but the trials themselves prove the genuineness of our faith. Faith clings to a Savior we have not seen, but love. And this unseen Savior gives us the inexpressible joy of proof and peace even in the face of doubt.

*Note: The second lessons from Easter 2-6 contain a series of continual readings from 1 Peter. The preacher may consider an Easter Season sermon series.*

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ACTS 10:34A, 36, 39-43**

The Gentile believers to whom Peter spoke had never seen the risen Lord. But Peter had; Peter had watched Jesus eat and drink; Peter had touched and felt his risen body. God had made his disciples both apostles and witnesses of the resurrection so that they could provide proof for the Gentiles. They were sent to give this proof and proclaim Christ’s peace to these new Christians who fulfilled Jesus’ promise to Thomas: they had not seen, but yet they believed.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

165 O Sons and Daughters of the King

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

29 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending  
 32 When Sinners See Their Lost Condition  
 118 O Dearest Lord, Thy Sacred Head  
 142 Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain  
 145 Jesus Lives! The Victory’s Won  
 149 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today  
 151 Triumphant from the Grave  
 154 Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks  
 158 I Am Content! My Jesus Lives Again  
 159 Morning Breaks upon the Tomb  
 160 This Joyful Eastertide

161 Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands  
 308 As Surely As I Live, God Said  
 341 Crown Him with Many Crowns  
 346 In You Is Gladness  
 368 O Savior, Precious Savior  
 406 This Is the Threefold Truth  
 416 How Firm a Foundation  
 428 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me  
 434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart  
 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving  
 558 Christ High-Ascended

704 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending  
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  
739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me  
746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd  
756 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight  
768 How Firm a Foundation

# THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

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Hope Restored. The certain hope of eternal life with God is founded on the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of Christ. God had promised this ancient hope in the Garden at the dawn of time. God had carried this ancient hope in his Word through the ages. How did the disciples fail to anticipate the resurrection? How did the teachers and people of Israel fail to see the Messiah God had promised and delivered? They let their wants and cultural expectations color their view of Scripture, and hope was lost. But God restored this ancient hope by raising Jesus from the dead and pointing his people back to his promises.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 24:13-35	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 2:14a, 36-47	Acts 24:10-21
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Peter 1:17-21	
<i>Psalm</i>	67	
<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)

## THE GOSPEL: LUKE 24:13-35

*Note: The events of this lesson precede last Sunday's lesson. Care will need to be taken to establish the timing and setting of these events on Easter Sunday afternoon.*

For these two disciples on the road, it was a day of great puzzlement, sadness, and disillusionment. They left the Holy City having heard the report of the women and Peter and John. But their understanding of God's plan of salvation was deficient: they weren't expecting a resurrection! John puts his finger on the disciples' problem. "They still did not understand *from Scripture* that Jesus had to rise from the dead." (John 20:9). Their sight, logic, emotions, and expectations had led them to abandon what Scripture said. But our gracious Lord comes and identifies the problem: they are not believing *all* that the prophets have spoken. They chose only to believe those parts of Scripture that met their preconceived notions of what the Messiah should be. Our Lord addresses the problem by explaining *all* the Scriptures that showed the Christ had to die and rise. How well did they learn the lesson? They marveled at how he opened the Scriptures to them and restored that ancient hope!

**FIRST LESSON: ACTS 2:14A, 36-47**

This lesson continues Peter’s Pentecost sermon from last Sunday with the culmination of his message to the people of Israel. They had lost the ancient hope long promised, and instead they placed their hope in the punctilious performance of human ordinances. Peter’s sermon dashes their false hope to pieces. Could there be a better preachment of specific Law than Peter’s words here? Could there be a better preachment of specific Gospel as Peter restores their hope through the sweet message of Christ crucified and risen for sinners? Pastors, preach Law that kills and Gospel that raises to life. C.F.W. Walther’s *Sixth Thesis on Law and Gospel* says, “God’s Word is not properly divided when the Law is not preached in its full severity nor the Gospel in its full sweetness...” Rightly dividing Law and Gospel leads to hope restored in the Savior.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 1:17-21**

This is the second in a series of five continual readings from 1 Peter. Peter’s first epistle is a letter of hope in the midst of suffering. He wrote to believers elected by God but persecuted for their faith. Trials and grief try to choke out our hope. But how empty life would be if we followed the way of the world! We would have nothing but a short life in this world of pain with no hope for a better future. Our hope is restored when we remember that we were bought by the blood of Christ, and that one day we will join our glorious Savior in our heavenly home. Until that day, we live in this world as strangers who are focused on going home.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ACTS 24:10-21**

After his arrest at the temple, Paul stood before the Sanhedrin. The session erupted into a brawl when Paul asserted his belief in the resurrection, a divisive issue for Pharisees and Sadducees, and the Roman officer had to remit Paul to the regional governor. In this lesson, Paul is on trial in Caesarea before Governor Felix. The Sanhedrin had hired the lawyer Tertullus to accuse Paul of leading the Nazarene sect. In Paul’s reply to Tertullus he asserts that Christianity is no sect, but agrees with all that is written in the Law and the Prophets. It is the Pharisees and the Sadducees that abandoned Scripture and became a sect without hope. We hold to the ancient hope of Scripture: the resurrection of the dead.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

160 This Joyful Eastertide

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

108 Jesus, Refuge of the Weary

184 O Holy Spirit, Enter In

226 To Your Temple I Draw Near

249 God of Mercy, God of Grace

281 God Has Spoken by His Prophets

333 Abide, O Dearest Jesus

346 In You Is Gladness

372 I Lay My Sins on Jesus

436 Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep

492 Son of God, Eternal Savior

494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds

541 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide

574 May God Bestow on Us His Grace

588 Abide with Me

714 The Lamb

722 Scatter the Darkness, Break the Gloom

736 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized

737 God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It

739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me

741 Take and Eat

743 O Gracious Lord, I Firmly Am Believing  
747 There Is a Redeemer  
748 Lamb of God  
750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate  
751 Word of God, When All Was Silent  
752 In Christ Alone  
753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us  
764 There Is a Time for Everything  
780 Stay With Us, Till Night Has Come  
783 Stay With Us, Lord, the Sun Descends

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

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Good Shepherd Sunday. The image of shepherd and sheep are certainly familiar to modern Christians, but do those concepts resonate as deeply for us as they did for the people of God 2000 years ago? “In such a landscape as Judea, where a day’s pasture is thinly scattered over an unfenced tract of country, covered with delusive paths, frequented by wild beasts, and rolling off into the desert, the shepherd and his character are indispensable. On some high moor, across which at night the hyenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, armed, leaning on his staff, and looking out over his scattered sheep, every one of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judea sprang to the front in his people’s history; why they gave his name to their kings; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice.” (George Smith) On Good Shepherd Sunday we see how sharp the contrast is between true shepherds and false shepherds. All is determined by their relationship to Christ, the only gate for the sheep.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 10:1-10	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60	1 Samuel 17:34-37
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Peter 2:19-25	Hebrews 13:20-21
<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 10:1-10

In the three-year cycle of readings, Good Shepherd Sunday draws its Gospel lessons from successive readings of John 10. In this lesson, Christ only infers that he is the Good Shepherd. Rather, the great “I am” statement that sets the direction for this Sunday is “I am the gate for the sheep.” The preceding context of this lesson is crucial. After Jesus healed the man born blind, the Pharisees interrogated the man and his family about the healing. The Pharisees had already rejected Jesus as the Christ and were expelling from the synagogue anyone who confessed Christ. After throwing the man out of the synagogue, they verbally accost Jesus. This lesson is his answer to them. Jesus’ “I am” statements highlight the exclusivity of the Christian message. Christ is Savior, and there is no other! Jesus is the only gate for the sheep, and there is no other! When a man approaches the sheep, one only needs to see how he enters the pen. Does he use the gate, i.e., does he confess Christ as Savior? True shepherds use the gate, preach Christ, and love the sheep. False shepherds refuse the gate, reject Christ, and destroy the flock.

**FIRST LESSON: ACTS 6:1-9; 7:2A, 51-60**

Note the sharp contrast between true shepherds and false shepherds. The apostles' care for Christ and his Church leads them to raise up more leaders to serve. See how these new leaders enter by the gate! Stephen holds to Christ no matter what the consequences! But how true were Jesus' words about false shepherds: they come only to kill and destroy. With their words and teeth and rocks they testified to whom they belonged. Stephen was a μάρτυς until the end, a witness of the Savior who waited to bring him to eternal pasture. Psalm 23 graces many funerals. How fitting that on this day when we hear of the Church's first martyr, we sing Psalm 23 and remember Stephen, a true shepherd who now dwells in the house of the Lord forever.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 2:19-25**

Undoubtedly, the Church was rocked by the martyrdom of Stephen—Peter included. Yet Peter reminds us that not even suffering and tragedy can remove us from the care of our Good Shepherd. To be the gate for straying sheep meant that Jesus had to suffer for us. So Jesus did—willingly, silently—bearing the sins of straying sheep. Now Peter calls us to follow our Shepherd and Overseer, even if it means that we suffer for doing good.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 1 SAMUEL 17:34-37**

Long before he was the royal shepherd of the kingdom of Israel, David shepherded his father's flock in the wild country. He let no danger stop him from caring for his sheep. No law required a shepherd to fight lion and bear for the sake of the sheep. In fact, David's words here and Christ's in John 10 are all the more striking because Rabbinic law made it clear that a shepherd was not called upon to expose his own life for the safety of his flock. David, a good shepherd, knew what he spoke of when he extolled the comfort of the Shepherd's rod and staff in Psalm 23. See his words fulfilled in great David's greater Son!

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 13:20-21**

Only one gate leads to life eternal, because only Christ provided the blood of the eternal covenant. As we sheep stand looking back at the Easter miracle, we are empowered and equipped to follow our Shepherd wherever he may lead.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

375 The King of Love My Shepherd Is

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven

329 Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing

339 Today Your Mercy Calls Us

348 Jesus, Jesus, Only Jesus

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

399 To God Be the Glory

432 I Am Jesus' Little Lamb

436 Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep

442 Have No Fear, Little Flock

508 Gracious Savior, Gentle Shepherd

515 Shepherd of Tender Youth

536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head

552 By All Your Saints Still Striving  
576 Spread, Oh, Spread the Mighty Word  
711 Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure Eternal  
741 Take and Eat  
746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd  
750 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate  
766 The Lord's My Shepherd; I'll Not Want  
772 When Jesus Came from Nazareth



# FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

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I am the way, the truth, and the life. Christ's message is so exclusive that it rejects all others. There is only one way to the Father, and that way is a *person*. He does not say, 'I show you the way,' like a second Moses, but I am the way. Nor 'I have the truth,' like another Elijah, but I am the truth. Not only 'I lead unto life,' as one of his apostles, but I am the life. (Kögel) The exclusivity of salvation resting in the person of Jesus Christ is a rock against which the unbelieving world crushes itself, but upon which God builds his Church.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 14:1-12	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 17:1-12	1 Kings 18:16-45
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Peter 2:4-10	
<i>Psalm</i>	33	
<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)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 14:1-12

*He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.* Martin Luther's Thesis 20, the *Heidelberg Disputations*, 1518 AD.

Jesus bids farewell to his disciples on the night he was betrayed. He tries to set their hearts at rest and tells them to trust God and him regarding this departure. But the disciples' faith is clouded by doubt and false hopes. Thomas cannot conceive of a Messianic kingdom that involves death or departure. They did not want to see God in sufferings, but in glory. Philip, like us all, wanted to see the Father. Show us the glory cloud! Show us the fiery mountain! Show us the sapphire pavement! Show us the throne ringed by cherubim and seraphim! Show us the Father! Sinful man wants to look right past this man from Galilee. Sinful man fails to see the truth expressed in Luther's thesis, the truth so crucial to the theology of the cross: the hidden God reveals himself by hiding himself. There is only one way, and that way is a person. Jesus points Thomas and Philip to the one person who reveals the hidden God to us. Let the preacher note the definite articles in verse 6. We are tempted to think there must be more than this humble man from Galilee. Oh, there is! Look closer and see the hidden God. See grace in the flesh—the God of glory willing to hide himself unto death for me.

**FIRST LESSON: ACTS 17:1-12**

Paul said it was necessary for God to hide himself in suffering: τὸν χριστὸν ἔδει παθεῖν. All the popular conceptions of Messiah as earthly king were wrong. Not only *did* Messiah suffer and die, Messiah *had to suffer and die*! All the prophecies found their fulfillment in the person of Jesus of Nazareth: οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστὸς [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς ὃν ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν. The exclusivity of the Christian message led to vociferous rejection by the people of Israel, both at home and abroad. But the stone the builders rejected has made a new people, a chosen people, a people filled with eagerness and hope in Christ.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 2:4-10**

The world looks at God hidden in Christ and sees either a loser or a joke (1 Corinthians 1). The Jews rejected him because of his humility. The world today rejects him because of his claims of being the one way, the one truth, the one life. In neither case do they see Christ as the stone that should set their angles or head their corners. They would rather fashion their lives by their own design. This rejected stone, however, will ultimately be their downfall. For believers, though, this rejected stone is what saves and builds. Jesus said, “ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ζωὴ.” That living stone is Life, gives life, and makes living stones out of people who were scattered in darkness.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 1 KINGS 18:16-45**

Ahab and Jezebel had institutionalized idolatry and persecution on a national scale. To people worshipping a false god of the storm, God sent his prophet to announce his judgment: There would be no rain. After three years of drought, famine crippled the kingdom. Against that backdrop, God sent Elijah to a showdown with Ahab and his false prophets. In the context of this Sunday, the lesson shows the emptiness and impotence of all other ways besides the one way. No matter their outward show of power or prestige, 450 prophets and the might of royalty could not change the spiritual reality that there is one way, one truth, one life. Even today, a whole world of false teachers and TV bible scholars cannot change the spiritual reality that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. The drama of this narrative engages: as the water runs down and fills the trench, we wait. As the fire descends and consumes, we marvel. As the people’s hearts are turned back to God, we shout Elijah’s (אֱלֹהִים) – note the translation) name: The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

141 At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

145 Jesus Lives! The Victory’s Won  
 152 I Know that My Redeemer Lives  
 170 Draw Us to Thee  
 172 Up through Endless Ranks of Angels  
 175 Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise  
 248 When in Our Music God Is Glorified  
 254 The Day Full of Grace  
 343 Christ Is the World’s Light

351 Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus  
 356 You Are the Way; through You Alone  
 359 Jesus, My Great High Priest  
 367 Christ Be My Leader  
 391 God Loved the World So that He Gave  
 426 Yours Forever, God of Love  
 528 Christ Is Our Cornerstone  
 529 Built on the Rock

531 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation  
581 Father, We Praise You  
729 There Is a Blessed Home  
733 Rejoice in God  
734 When in Our Music God Is Glorified  
741 Take and Eat  
759 Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled  
771 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light  
774 Church of God, Elect and Glorious  
775 For Builders Bold, Whose Vision Pure  
776 Sing with All the Saints in Glory

# SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

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The love of God who lives in us leads to a life of obedience. Jesus' promise of another Counselor is a loaded one: the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to do what Jesus asks. This Sunday's lessons teach that love for our risen Lord means obedience to his commands. Only Jesus' promises make that possible. The Prayer of the Day sets the tone: "Put your Spirit in us to think those things that are true and long for those things that are good..."

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 14:15-21	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 17:22-31	Genesis 4:1-16
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Peter 3:15-22	1 John 3:13-18
<i>Psalm</i>	66	
<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)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 14:15-21

Because *I* live, *you, too*, will live! Jesus promises more than just a resurrection from the dead for his disciples. Note the tenses in verse 19: in the very face of his own death, Jesus did not promise that he would come back to life, but that he is alive in the soteriological sense. Verse 6 said, "ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ζωή." Jesus is life, that state of blessed holiness and perfect righteousness and communion with God. Man had lost that life in Adam's fall, and sin and death rushed into the vacuum left behind. The Son of God, the Life, came to bring it back. Because he is alive, we, too, will live in blessedness and holiness forever. We are children who will never be orphaned, but rather will be comforted, counseled, and kept forever. What is our response? Life lived as God intended—a life that treasures our Lord, his Word, and obedience to both!

## FIRST LESSON: ACTS 17:22-31

Could this lesson be more timely? Paul preached to a people enamored with spirituality, but ignorant of the true God. To a people who thought they had all the answers, Paul offers real knowledge of the true God unknown to them. Imagine the scene on Mars Hill. Rising above them, the higher hill of the Acropolis loomed and upon its peak the Parthenon dominated the skyline. This timeless treasure of architecture marked the high point of Greek art and culture, and served as a temple for the city's patron goddess, Athena. In front of this jaw-dropping beauty, Paul says, "God does not live in temples built by hands." No,

this unknown God made himself known by living with us, and then living in us. Love for this risen Lord leads to a life filled with loving obedience, cf. the quote from the Greek poet Epimenides (v 28a).

### SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 3:15-22

This is the fifth reading from 1 Peter during the Easter season. Last week Peter declared what we are in Christ: a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God. In this lesson he details what that means for our lives: Set apart Christ as Lord. Love for our Lord means obedience to his commands—even if that obedience means suffering. The Christian can offer willing obedience in the face of suffering because Christ rules, and Holy Baptism guarantees our connection to him.

*Note: Verse 21 comments on this baptism that now saves us. The NIV says that baptism is “the pledge of a good conscience toward God.” The footnote suggests “response of a good conscience” as an alternate translation. “Response” is the worst choice because it is most likely to be understood as our response toward God, rather than his promise to us. “Pledge” could be understood correctly, but only if we understand God as the pledge maker, not us. The word ἐπερώτημα can mean “answer” in a legal sense, so a better translation would be, “the legal claim of a good conscience toward God.” (Brug)*

### SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 4:1-16

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they opened a Pandora’s box on an unsuspecting world. Life as God intended had disappeared from this world. Expelled from the garden and guarded from the Tree of Life, man would know only the tolling death knell of *וַיָּמָת*. But to this dying world, God promised a Savior, born of woman, who would restore to man life as he had once lived. That promise had so quickened Adam’s heart that even when faced with the new reality of living death, he gave his wife the name Life, *חַיָּה*, because through her womb the eternal Gospel would be fulfilled, and this life of death deferred would become a life of death destroyed. When this womb produced its first fruit, Eve exclaimed: *קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה*. Luther offers a grammatically correct opinion that Eve thought she had given birth to the promised Seed (I have gotten a man, the LORD). How wrong that thought would have been! She did not bear God’s Son, but Adam’s son, Cain, who showed that mere obedience does not please God, but only the obedience that flows from faith and love. Abel lived in the blessedness of forgiveness, and not even his brother’s murderous actions could take away that true Life.

### SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 JOHN 3:13-18

Love means obedience to God. It was love that led Jesus to obey his Father, obedient to death, even death on a cross for us. Now that same love empowers us to love our brother. Hatred and vengeance have their home east of Eden. But here, among the people of God, there is no room for hatred—only love. Christians are to be the antithesis of Cain: we lay down our lives for our brothers, not just in word, but in every daily deed. We do it because we now have that life once lost, but now regained by our living Savior. We have passed from death to life.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

5 As Angels Joyed with One Accord

143 He's Risen, He's Risen

155 Christ the Lord Is Risen Again

169 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

172 Up through Endless Ranks of Angels

189 Jehovah, Let Me Now Adore You

235 Praise the Almighty; My Soul, Adore Him

297 Baptized in Water

332 Go, My Children, with My Blessing

343 Christ Is the World's Light

355 Take the World, but Give Me Jesus

396 In Adam We Have All Been One

476 Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower

479 Jesus, Your Boundless Love to Me

480 Almighty Father, Heaven and Earth

482 Forgive Us, Lord

496 Glorious in Majesty

529 Built on the Rock

562 I Love to Tell the Story

723 Holy Spirit, the Dove Sent from Heaven

736 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized

737 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It

739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me

# THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

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Christ rules all things for his Church. In the early 700s AD, there lived an English churchman known to history as the Venerable Bede. He was the great teacher of the middle ages, the man who divided history into AD and BC, the first great historian of the English language and a devout man of God. On May 25, 735 AD, on the great Ascension Vigil, Bede finished his translation of the Gospel of St. John into Old English. Then, on that day of Ascension, he died. From his deathbed, the Teacher of the Middle Ages spoke the words that have become the Prayer of the Day on Ascension. This beautiful prayer sets the tone for the day, beginning with a note of triumph and ending with a supplication for the Spirit and his work.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 24:44-53	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 1:1-11	Esther 6
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Ephesians 1:16-23	Colossians 3:1-4
<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)

## THE GOSPEL: LUKE 24:44-53

Ascension marks the coronation of our Prophet-Priest as King. Today we see his enthronement in glory and power to rule all things for the Church. Even at this late date, the disciples failed to understand Jesus' mission. So Christ opened the Scriptures to them to show once more that this was the Christ as prophesied. He told them, "This was the way it had to be! And you, you are now well-informed witnesses of the fact that I am both Lord and Christ." Finally, his disciples understood: *Christus est Deus*. There was no more doubting, no more fearing, no more worry. Christ is God. They worshipped the God-Man and watched him depart with his hands raised in unending blessing. No wonder they went home rejoicing! No longer would they hide behind locked doors; no longer would they cower; no longer would they fear the Sanhedrin. Instead they would fill the temple with public praise, because *Christus est Deus!* Their rabbi, their friend, their brother...he was God and ruled all things for his Church.

**FIRST LESSON: ACTS 1:1-11**

The weeks of Easter had been filled with breathless joy in the presence of their living Savior. For forty days the disciples listened to Christ speak about the kingdom of God. All that kingdom talk whetted their appetite for power and authority. They had seen their Savior suffer; now they were ready to see him win. Jesus offered them the tantalizing promise of something greater than John's baptism, whom he had called the greatest man even born. What could it be? What heights of power and authority were waiting now that Jesus reigned as God and Lord? And so, Οὐὐ, because of that, they asked him a question that makes us marvel. Verse 6 displays the depth of their culturally ingrained misunderstanding of Messiah: they certainly had spiritual hopes for Jesus, but even at this late date they could not divorce them from their expectations of an earthly kingdom. Christ's answer gives direction for the Church of all time. They would get power, but not for an earthly kingdom. Rather, they would receive Spirit-power to be heralds of the impending kingdom of heaven.

**SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 1:16-23**

The post-ascension disciples no longer had their teacher with them walking the roads of Israel as before. We endtime disciples do not have Jesus' visible presence with us either. Yet there is no ascension sadness, because the Church knows exactly where Christ is. He has taken up his power and has begun to reign with might that knows no limit and glory that knows no bounds. With a head like that, what foe have we to fear?

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ESTHER 6**

Esther is unique among Biblical books: it makes no mention of God at all. Yet the book clearly shows the sovereignty of God throughout. The account of Haman and Mordecai shows that our Lord rules all things for his Church—often in ways unseen. History does not happen by coincidence or accident, but the book of Esther shows the hand of God ruling over the nations with quiet acts of providence. No matter the evil plans and purposes of men, God's providential care for his Church cannot be thwarted.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: COLOSSIANS 3:1-4**

On the mount of Ascension the angels asked, "Why do you stand here looking into the sky?" The Church must be about its appointed work in the post-ascension world; we cannot merely stare after our ascended Lord. Yet while our eyes turn back to this world and the work in front of us, our hearts never cease their upward gaze, longing to see him come again, just as he went. With hearts and minds set on things above, and with eyes and hands and mouths busy with the work he has given us, the Church journeys on in confidence and hope that cannot be shaken, no matter what befalls us here on earth. Our Gospel is not one of health and wealth, but of a life hidden from this world—hidden with Christ in God...for now, but not forever.

*Note: Congregations that use a paschal candle may consider the Recession of the Paschal candle on Ascension. Having been burned for the seven weeks of Easter, the lit paschal candle is carried out of the nave to signify Christ removing his visible presence from us.*



**HYMN OF THE DAY**

173 On Christ's Ascension I Now Build

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

9 Jesus, Your Church with Longing Eyes  
29 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending  
169 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus  
170 Draw Us to Thee  
171 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing  
172 Up through Endless Ranks of Angels  
174 See, the Conqueror Mounts in Triumph  
175 Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise  
180 Holy Spirit, God of Love  
184 O Holy Spirit, Enter In  
291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word  
341 Crown Him with Many Crowns  
350 All Praise Be Yours

352 Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor  
370 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name  
371 Oh, Love, How Deep  
377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice  
518 Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go  
536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head  
557 On Galilee's High Mountain  
558 Christ High-Ascended  
561 Lord, Speak to Us that We May Speak  
704 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending  
731 The King Will Come at Age's End  
746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd

*Note: "A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing," (CW 171) was also written by the Venerable Bede.*

# SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

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Live in eager expectation of glory! That glory is not dimmed by earthly suffering; rather, such suffering reminds us of the glory that awaits us. First the cross; then the crown. Our light and momentary troubles cannot mute the joy of living in eager expectation of glory. The week that falls between Ascension and Pentecost is one of waiting and expectation for the promised Spirit and the promised glory. The Prayer and Verse of the Day mark the impending nature of our departure and Christ's return.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 17:1-11a	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Acts 1:1-14	1 Samuel 1:21-28
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11	2 Corinthians 4:13-18
<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 14:23)

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 17:1-11A

Can you hear the certainty in Christ's voice? Can you feel the authority resonate from his words? Stop for a moment and marvel at the words Christ speaks even as his enemies prepare to arrest him, to torture him, to kill him. Christ enters his passion as victor. We know the end of the story; we know this is Christ's path to glory. But what would the disciples think in the next few hours as the blows landed, the whip bit, the nails pierced, and the blood flowed? This is glory? Just wait...these sufferings would not last. Just wait...glory is coming. Look at Jesus' promise: he has been granted all authority—but he uses it to give, not to take. He gives us life eternal won by the glory of his completed work. On this post-ascension Sunday, Christ's promise to return to his Father has proven true. What comfort, then, is his promised prayer for us who remain behind! We are in the world, but not as orphans, and so we bear our sufferings in eager expectation of the glory that's coming.

## FIRST LESSON: ACTS 1:1-14

The disciples rightly expected glory; they just expected it too soon. The time would come for them to rule with Jesus in his kingdom. The time would come for glory that knows no limit. But that time had not yet arrived. The Christian life is not lived in glory here and now, but in eager expectation of the glory that's coming soon.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 4:12-17; 5:6-11**

Peter wrote at a time when Nero and the empire had turned against the Way. As followers of a *religio illicita*, great suffering impended for the faithful Christians. The lion’s roar could be heard coming ever closer to the people of God. In this life, sufferings will come; but we live in eager expectation of glory. The God of all grace called us to future glory, and no suffering, no emperor or empire can make us lose sight of what awaits us. The cares we have, we cast on him, knowing that any suffering can be borne in joy with eyes fixed on the glory that’s coming.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 1 SAMUEL 1:21-28**

Afflicted by her rival, Peninnah, Hannah’s troubles seemed neither light nor momentary. Her barrenness brought suffering and sadness that embittered her life, but it did not shake her faith. At the house of the LORD she cast her cares on him and prayed, expectant of God’s grace and blessing. She humbled herself under God’s mighty hand, and he lifted her up in due time: the son she longed for would become Samuel, the leader of God’s people. On this Sunday of expectation, Hannah’s example shines: she did not focus her eyes on what was seen, on the troubles of this life, but on the unseen eternal glory that God had stored up for her. For her eager expectation of glory, see 1 Samuel 2.

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

Who thinks that their troubles are light or momentary? When we lose a loved one, when we face mortal illness or financial ruin—who could ever think those troubles insignificant or passing? Only people who have a perspective that stretches to the unbounded time of eternity and encompasses the unbounded joy that we eagerly expect there. We believe that one day Christ will present us to the Father for an eternity of glory. Therefore...therefore we fix our eyes not on all our problems that we know so well, but on the unseen glory, the eternal glory that we do not yet know, but eagerly expect.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

359 Jesus, My Great High Priest

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 76 Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love          | 270 We All Believe in One True God       |
| 169 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus              | 271 We All Believe in One True God       |
| 170 Draw Us to Thee                      | 341 Crown Him with Many Crowns           |
| 171 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing          | 344 At the Name of Jesus                 |
| 172 Up through Endless Ranks of Angels   | 350 All Praise Be Yours                  |
| 173 On Christ's Ascension I Now Build    | 351 Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus          |
| 174 See, the Conqueror Mounts in Triumph | 352 Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor |
| 175 Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise      | 359 Jesus, My Great High Priest          |
| 202 If God Had Not Been on Our Side      | 370 All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name    |
| 205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven        | 371 Oh, Love, How Deep                   |
| 218 Then the Glory                       | 403 I Know My Faith Is Founded           |
| 256 How Great Thou Art                   | 411 What a Friend We Have in Jesus       |

428 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me  
431 I Walk in Danger All the Way  
558 Christ High-Ascended  
725 Christ, the Lord of Hosts, Unshaken  
757 Where Your Treasure Is

# THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE DAY OF PENTECOST

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I will pour out my Spirit. God’s Old Testament people celebrated the gathering of the harvest at the Festival of Weeks. On the fiftieth day, God sent the promised Counselor on the day we call “Pentecost” (Greek for “fifty” from the LXX in Lev 23:15: ἀριθμήσετε πενήτηκοντα ἡμέρας). This day marked the birthday of the New Testament Church and celebrates the harvest of souls won by the Son and gathered by his servants empowered by his Spirit. Pentecost is the third great festival of the Church and has been commemorated since at least 217 A.D. The Church dresses in red to remind us of the tongues of fire that marked the Spirit’s gift and the blood of the martyrs which was the seed of the Church. This day culminates the Season of Easter when our risen Lord now empowers his people to be witnesses of the resurrection for the world.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	John 16:5-11	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Joel 2:28-29	
<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.

## THE GOSPEL: JOHN 16:5-11

How could Jesus’ departure be advantageous for the disciples? Only when Jesus had finished his redemptive work and returned to the Father would he send the Counselor. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fulfilled this promise of Jesus as the Counselor who would work on the world by dwelling in his disciples. His great work is to convict the world in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment. As the Holy Spirit prompted the disciples to preach the Gospel, both believers and unbelievers heard and were convicted in regard to sin—resulting in either repentance or obduracy. The Holy Spirit convicts the world in regard to righteousness, because the purchase price for righteousness had now been paid, (“I am going to the Father”), and the world would either receive it by faith or reject it in unbelief. The Holy Spirit convicts the world in regard to judgment, because although the world has not yet been judged, its ruler has (Revelation 20). The preaching of the Gospel never leaves hearts the same: by either quickening or hardening, the Spirit convicts mankind.

**FIRST LESSON: JOEL 2:28-29**

In the Old Testament God poured out his Spirit on the prophets and so revealed his will through visions and dreams. In Numbers 11, God anointed the 70 elders with his Spirit so that they prophesied. When Moses' young aide loyally objected to some of the elders prophesying in the camp, Moses said, "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" The prophet Joel said that one day, Moses' wish would be fulfilled. But when? "Afterward," in the Messianic age, in the last age of the earth that began on the day God kept the promise of Joel and the wish of Moses and put his Spirit on all his people.

**SECOND LESSON: ACTS 2:1-21**

The Church follows in the footsteps of Christ who was prepared for his ministry by a dramatic, visible outpouring of the Spirit at his baptism. Jesus kept his promise to baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The real miracle of Pentecost is the transformative gift of the Holy Spirit, taking timid followers of Jesus and making them bold witnesses who carried the Gospel to the world. The sound of the violent wind served as a sign, but was not the gift. The tongues of fire marked its arrival, but they were not the gift. Miraculously speaking in foreign languages was a result, but it was not the gift. "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit." Moses wished it; Joel foretold it; the disciples lived it. The sin that had scattered mankind at Babel had been atoned. The last age of the earth (vv 19-21) wouldn't be marked by the dividing of the peoples, but by their uniting into the Church of Christ where there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

176 Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

177 Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest

179 Hail Thee, Festival Day

180 Holy Spirit, God of Love

186 O Spirit of Life, O Spirit of God

187 When God the Spirit Came

188 Creator Spirit, by Whose Aid

190 We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost

192 Triune God, Oh, Be Our Stay

200 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

201 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

229 This Day at Your Creating Word

272 Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

281 God Has Spoken by His Prophets

377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

400 O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth

455 Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You

471 Renew Me, O Eternal Light

564 There Is a Balm in Gilead

578 Saints of God, the Dawn Is Brightening

598 My Maker, Be with Me

723 Holy Spirit, the Dove Sent from Heaven

# THE SEASON OF PENTECOST

## *The Church grows*

After reliving the great events of the life of Christ, the worshipping Church spends half a year focusing on the teachings of Christ. The Church wears green during the season of Pentecost as the Spirit uses those teachings of Jesus to grow the faith of believers. The appointed lessons teach us the characteristics of the Holy Ministry, the Christian, the Church, our God, and the Christian life. The editor offers this suggestion as a path for worship planning in the Pentecost Season. (JES)

### THE HOLY MINISTRY...

<i>Pentecost 1</i>	<i>The Holy Ministry proclaims the Triune God</i>
<i>Pentecost 2</i>	<i>The Holy Ministry stands on the rock-solid truth of God's Word</i>
<i>Pentecost 3</i>	<i>The Holy Ministry is filled with people who God called out of his boundless mercy</i>
<i>Pentecost 4</i>	<i>The Holy Ministry is given by God out of compassion for his people</i>
<i>Pentecost 5</i>	<i>The Holy Ministry preaches Christ in spite of persecution</i>

### THE CHRISTIAN...

<i>Pentecost 6</i>	<i>The Christian loves God above all things</i>
<i>Pentecost 7</i>	<i>The Christian finds rest in Jesus</i>
<i>Pentecost 8</i>	<i>The Christian is planted by the Word</i>
<i>Pentecost 9</i>	<i>The Christian lives as wheat among weeds</i>
<i>Pentecost 10</i>	<i>The Christian seeks spiritual wealth</i>
<i>Pentecost 11</i>	<i>The Christian trusts God to provide</i>
<i>Pentecost 12</i>	<i>The Christian answers doubt with faith</i>

### THE CHURCH...

<i>Pentecost 13</i>	<i>The Church is meant for all people</i>
<i>Pentecost 14</i>	<i>The Church will stand forever</i>
<i>Pentecost 15</i>	<i>The Church is militant: first the cross, then the crown</i>
<i>Pentecost 16</i>	<i>The Church fulfills her role as her brother's keeper</i>
<i>Pentecost 17</i>	<i>The Church forgives as God forgives</i>

### OUR GOD...

<i>Pentecost 18</i>	<i>Our God is incomprehensibly gracious</i>
<i>Pentecost 19</i>	<i>Our God wants real repentance and true obedience</i>
<i>Pentecost 20</i>	<i>Our God patiently seeks fruits of faith</i>
<i>Pentecost 21</i>	<i>Our God invites unworthy sinners to participate in his blessing</i>

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE...

<i>Pentecost 22</i>	<i>The Christian life appreciates godly government</i>
<i>Pentecost 23</i>	<i>The Christian life fulfills the Law by loving everyone around us</i>
<i>Pentecost 24</i>	<i>The Christian life faithfully uses all God's gifts</i>

*The Book of Romans: the Basics of the Christian Faith, One Word at a Time.*

The Second Lessons of Year A, Pentecost 2-17 feature series of sixteen readings through Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. The preacher may consider a sermon series to share this great discourse on the basics of the Christian faith. These lessons read like a curriculum for St. Paul’s adult instruction class and provide an excellent opportunity to walk the parish through the basic doctrines of the Church, one word at a time. The editor offers this suggestion for a sixteen-week series. (JES)

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, ONE WORD AT A TIME	
<i>Pentecost 2</i>	<i>Atonement</i>
<i>Pentecost 3</i>	<i>Righteousness</i>
<i>Pentecost 4</i>	<i>Reconciliation</i>
<i>Pentecost 5</i>	<i>Reversal</i>
<i>Pentecost 6</i>	<i>Buried (Baptism)</i>
<i>Pentecost 7</i>	<i>Battling (Sin)</i>
<i>Pentecost 8</i>	<i>Longing (Eschatology)</i>
<i>Pentecost 9</i>	<i>Praying (Prayer)</i>
<i>Pentecost 10</i>	<i>Chosen (Predestination)</i>
<i>Pentecost 11</i>	<i>Inseparable (Providence)</i>
<i>Pentecost 12</i>	<i>Roots (Old Testament Church)</i>
<i>Pentecost 13</i>	<i>Grafted (New Testament Church) [include verses 17-24]</i>
<i>Pentecost 14</i>	<i>Awe (Worship)</i>
<i>Pentecost 15</i>	<i>Sacrifice (Body ministry)</i>
<i>Pentecost 16</i>	<i>Love (A citizen of two kingdoms)</i>
<i>Pentecost 17</i>	<i>Freedom (Christian Freedom)</i>



# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—HOLY TRINITY

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We believe in the Triune God. “Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold to the true Christian faith. Whoever does not keep this faith pure in all points will certainly perish forever” (Athanasian Creed). The third and longest of the ecumenical creeds underscores the importance of this Sunday’s message. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a logical exercise or a dogmatic excursion. It’s central to our salvation. The Triune God is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Lose this doctrine, and as the Creed says, you lose it all. A Jesus who is less than God is also less than Savior.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 28:16-20	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Genesis 1:1—2:3	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	2 Corinthians 13:11-14	
<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.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 28:16-20

On a mountain in Galilee they met a man who had died, but lived again. Some of his disciples doubted, but the ones that believed his word bent the knee and worshipped this man as God. If what this man said was true, then God had died for them; God had risen for them; and now, God himself was calling them to a ministry for all nations. God reveals himself as triune: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The God who made us is the God who saved us and is still the God who sets us apart. Many ancient heresies wanted to make Jesus less than a man. Most modern heresies don’t bother making him anything more than a man. But the Church teaches all nations to obey everything Jesus commanded us.

## FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 1:1—2:3

Although the Bible ascribes certain works to each person (the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier), Augustine’s rule still stands that *opera ad extra sunt indivisa*: the external acts of the Godhead are shared. The Father created, the Son created, the Spirit created. The Father sanctifies, the Son sanctifies, the Spirit sanctifies. The only acts not shared by the persons are the *opera ad intra* which are

paternity, filiation, and procession. So when we read the account of creation here, we see all three persons of the Godhead at work. We read verse 1 in the context of Psalm 104 and John 1. God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—created a home for the crown of his creation. The Trinity was speaking to itself and of itself in the amazing words that displayed God’s intent for humankind: Let us make man in our image. The Triune God planned for creation’s crown to conform to His image. When Adam fell, it was the Triune God who resolved to restore man to the perfection in which he had been created. This plan to restore holiness to the world would involve all three persons to choose us, to redeem us, to call us to himself.

#### **SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-14**

The grace, the love, the fellowship. That is the story of the Trinity in the lives of believers. Grace is that which we don’t deserve; God’s love is what drove it; our fellowship with God and with each other is its result. We trust in God the Father, who fills us with hope. We trust in the Lord Jesus Christ: Lord—the one who bought us; Jesus—the name he carried here on earth when he came to save us; Christ—the office he filled for our salvation. We trust in the Holy Spirit, who called us by his power and by that same power causes us to overflow with hope and love for our fellowman.

*Note: The length of the Athanasian Creed often precludes its regular use in worship, but don’t miss the opportunity to use it on this Sunday. Emphasize the ecumenicity of the Creed: anyone who calls themselves Christian confesses these words. Articulate its history: doctrine worth dying over is doctrine worth discussing. Consider reading portions responsively.*

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

177 Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest  
178 Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest

#### **ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

72 O Lord, Our Father, Thanks and Praise	326 May the Grace of Christ Our Savior
191 Father Most Holy, Merciful, and Tender	481 O God, Your Hand the Heavens Made
192 Triune God, Oh, Be Our Stay	557 On Galilee’s High Mountain
193 Come, Now, Almighty King	558 Christ High-Ascended
194 Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices	566 We All Are One in Mission
195 Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty	576 Spread, Oh, Spread the Mighty Word
241 Alleluia! Let Praises Ring	590 God, Who Made the Earth and Heaven
247 Earth and All Stars	597 May God the Father of Our Lord
248 When in Our Music God Is Glorified	598 My Maker, Be with Me
261 We Sing the Almighty Power of God	724 Voices Raised to You We Offer
266 Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above	734 When in Our Music God Is Glorified
270 We All Believe in One True God	736 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized
273 Glory Be to the Father	737 God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It
280 Thy Strong Word	745 May the Peace of God
294 Baptized into Your Name Most Holy	753 Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us
297 Baptized in Water	761 Christ Is With Me

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Holy Ministry stands on the rock-solid truth of God’s Word. Not all who call themselves ministers do that, so watch out for false teachers! Many will come with wise sounding words and pious promises, but they are not what they seem. The Church’s only defense is to stand firmly on the rock-solid truth of God’s Word. The Season of Pentecost explicates the teachings of Christ and the application of faith in the life of the Christian. How fitting that this initial Sunday lays the foundation for that teaching and life: the inspired Word of God.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 7:15-29	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28	1 Kings 22:10-28
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 3:21-25a, 27, 28	2 Peter 1:20—2:3
<i>Psalm</i>	78	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

### VERSE OF THE DAY

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

### THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 7:15-29

The Sermon on the Mount closes with this admonition of our Lord: “Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few will find it.” The Gospel for today gives a reason so few will find that road: the deceptions of false teachers. Jesus warns the Church that no false prophet ever comes claiming to be one. We cannot judge them only by their actions—even Judas performed miracles. Outward power or piety merely masks the beast within false teachers. We must rather judge them by their fruit: not merely their moral lives, but the fruit of a prophet is his message. What does he say? He may speak it in the name of Jesus, but look at the prophet’s fruit, his message. The mark of a man on the narrow road, the mark of a true teacher is one who hears the words of Christ puts them into practice. That foundation of rock-solid truth can withstand any storm. True ministers of the Word proclaim the truth and put Christ’s words into practice.

### FIRST LESSON: DEUTERONOMY 11:18-21, 26-28

The words of this lesson inscribed on parchment have filled the phylacteries of Jews for thousands of years. Though they tied them to their hands and bound them to their foreheads, they failed to fix the Word of God in their hearts and minds. And so when the Word made flesh stood before them, they could not see the Messiah long promised. The teachers of Israel became false prophets, phylacteries and all. When God spoke these words through the ministry of Moses, he meant for them to have a home in our hearts, rather than just tied to our heads. Moses proclaimed the Word that gives both promise and warning. When the

Israelites retold the blessing and the curse, they did it next to Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. The mountains stood as a timeless testimony that there are only two choices: the rock-solid truth of God’s Word that brings fruitful life or the barren words of the false teachers that lead to nothing but death. How do we prepare ourselves to watch out for false teachers? We fix this rock-solid truth in our hearts and minds.

### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 3:21-25A, 27, 28**

What a great text this Sunday’s lesson provides for a Lutheran preacher! The opportunities are endless. However, in the context of this Sunday and its lessons, the point here is the content of the rock-solid truth proclaimed by the Holy Ministry. Namely, that only through Christ’s cross could both the Law and the Gospel be upheld. Only through Christ’s cross could all God’s words be kept. Only through Christ’s cross could God be both just and justifier. Only through Christ’s cross could man be justified by faith. That is rock-solid truth.

*Note: This lesson begins a series of readings through the Epistle to the Romans. For sixteen weeks, the Second Lesson will follow Paul’s dissertation on righteousness through faith. The preacher may consider a summer series that utilizes these lessons each Sunday. [See Pentecost introduction.](#)*

### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 1 KINGS 22:10-28**

Never before was there a man like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. As he and Jehoshaphat listened, prophet after prophet promised victory in the coming battle. Those prophets looked the part with their props and talked the talk by speaking in the name of the LORD. But as Jesus said, not everyone who prophesies in the name of the Lord is a true prophet. Judge them by their fruit—the message they speak. This lesson starkly reveals false prophets as the liars they are. But Micaiah stands on the rock-solid truth of God’s Word that will not be shaken by royal power, personal violence, or professional disdain. Mark Micaiah’s words carefully, and judge him by his fruit. No disguise, or ruse, or armor could hide Ahab from the arrow of God’s judgment, just as Micaiah prophesied. As the dogs licked Ahab’s blood from the chariot and Naboth’s murder was finally avenged, the false teachers were exposed as frauds, but God’s ministers who faithfully proclaimed his Word stood on a foundation that could withstand any storm.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 PETER 1:20—2:3**

False teachers like Zedekiah (Supplemental First Lesson) give their own interpretation, suited for themselves or their audience. Not so true prophesy! Verse 21 is one of the *sedes doctrinae* for the inspiration of Scripture. Using the false teachers as a foil, verse 21 says ἀλλὰ, and draws a direct contradiction between false prophesy and Scripture. Consider the Greek of 21b. Note the emphasis of position: The Holy Spirit is the important one here—ἄνθρωποι comes last! “By the Holy Spirit carried, men spoke from God.” The word is ἐλάλησαν, not a form of λέγω. Man did not contribute the message, but the mouth. Peter encourages us to be ready for false teachers: we know their coming, and we know their ending. The Holy Ministry watches out for false teachers and stands instead on the rock-solid truth of the inspired Word of God.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

190 We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven  
284 How Precious Is the Book Divine  
291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word  
293 God's Word Is Our Great Heritage  
318 Sent Forth by God's Blessing  
346 In You Is Gladness  
377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice  
382 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less  
386 Now I Have Found the Firm Foundation  
390 Salvation unto Us Has Come  
393 If Your Beloved Son, O God  
398 Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults  
416 How Firm a Foundation

434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart  
438 In God, My Faithful God  
475 The Man Is Ever Blest  
512 Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds  
536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head  
541 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide  
623 God the Father, Son, and Spirit  
714 The Lamb  
735 Speak, O Lord  
752 In Christ Alone  
756 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight  
768 How Firm a Foundation

# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Holy Ministry is filled with people who God called out of his boundless mercy. Nothing else could explain the choices for ministers that God made! He calls such sinful and weak men to fill this office. Only mercy can explain the men he chose in this Sunday's lessons: a despised tax collector, an exiled killer, a persecutor of Christians. How poignant these lessons are, when we remember that each lesson was penned by the unworthy minister called into service by God's boundless mercy!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 9:9-13	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Hosea 5:15—6:6	Exodus 3:1-15
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 4:18-25	1 Timothy 1:12-17
<i>Psalm</i>	119c	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 9:9-13

The call of Matthew manifests the mercy of God. The Pharisees knew the Scriptures and walked the walk. They left no sacrifice undone. Their outward righteousness and place of respect among the people were the mirror opposite of the man sitting in the tax collector's booth. Despised as a quisling and swindler, the publican's only companions were the other "sinners" who lived beyond the pale of Jewish Law. Yet the call of Christ to faith and apostleship did not come to these outwardly righteous Pharisees, but to the tax collector. So powerful was the call that Matthew left his station and his old life behind and followed. Jesus bypassed the Pharisees because they knew sacrifice but were blind to mercy. When they questioned Christ's acts of mercy, Jesus tells the teachers of Israel to go and learn Scripture, to see the difference between mercy and sacrifice...to see that their claims of righteousness were nothing but more whitewash on tombs. Can they really be healthy when they are blind to mercy for their brothers, blind to the prophets, and blind to the Messiah? Christ wanted different ministers than these. He wanted ministers who knew the mercy of God and would share the mercy of God. So he turned to the sinner, Matthew, and called him from his life of sin to a life of ministry with those merciful words, "Follow me."

**FIRST LESSON: HOSEA 5:15—6:6**

Jesus' words of condemnation for the Pharisees came from the mouth of Hosea, a prophet long familiar with unfaithful Israel. Like wanton Gomer, Israel had whored herself to false gods. In his mercy, God called to the people, the priests, and the nobility—and their response seemed so good! At first glance, the words that Israel spoke (6:1-3) seem a beautiful model of repentance. But this is unrepentant Israel's idea of "repentance" that had as little to do with godly repentance as the Pharisees' "righteousness" had to do with godly service. There is no confession of guilt; no fruits follow; God does not receive it. Their *תְּפִלָּה* burned off with the morning sun. Merely going through the motions of repentance did not cut it. Merely performing the outward functions of the Law did not suffice. God wanted an admission of guilt, an earnest seeking, but he did not find it. Only the *רַחֲמֵי* of God could solve their problem. "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them." (Hosea 14:4)

**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 4:18-25**

This is the second of sixteen lessons from book of Romans (Pentecost 2-17). How could God choose the ministers he did? How could God choose the people he did? How can God continue to love us after all the times we turn our back on him? Because of an alien righteousness, long promised and now credited to us and to all who believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 3:1-15**

We see the pre-incarnate Christ calling Moses into service by his mercy. What else could explain the choice? Moses had already proven himself a failure at delivering God's people from bondage. He was an exiled killer, living in the wilds of Midian after fleeing the court of Pharaoh. No wonder Moses asked, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?" Everyone called into God's service asks this question of themselves again and again. It comes from knowing that only mercy can explain God choosing us to serve him. But when the minister stops marveling at God's mercy and instead starts questioning God's choice, then God's answer rings out loud and true: I. Not you. I. Thirteen times in the NIV God uses the first person pronoun. Can the point be clearer? Your call is by my mercy, and the ability to perform the service I give you comes only from me, the great I AM. What comfort for both preacher and parishioner!

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17**

Paul tells the end result of a bright light on the Damascus road—Christ had come to call Saul to service by his mercy. But what an astounding choice! Such a man, to such an office! Only mercy could explain why Christ picked Paul, the worst of sinners. Could there have been a more unlikely man to call as Apostle to the Gentiles? The reason had nothing to do with Paul. It had to do with Christ and his *μακροθυμία*. It had to do with us: Jesus wanted us to know that the call to ministry is not based on merit, but on mercy. Here is the example *par excellance* of ministry based on Christ's mercy and not human merit: Saul, the persecutor, is called into ministry as Paul, the Apostle. When he reflects on God calling him to ministry, Paul cannot help but sing the praises of the King of mercy.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

596 Let Me Be Yours Forever

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

32 When Sinners See Their Lost Condition  
205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven  
240 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise  
283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening  
304 Jesus Sinners Does Receive  
305 From Depths of Woe I Cry to You  
313 Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior  
377 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice  
380 Lord, 'Tis Not that I Did Choose You  
384 By Grace I'm Saved  
385 Chief of Sinners Though I Be  
390 Salvation unto Us Has Come

399 To God Be the Glory  
401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ  
404 Faith Is a Living Power from Heaven  
458 May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill  
460 How Can I Thank You, Lord  
462 Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways  
463 Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult  
521 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace  
552 By All Your Saints Still Striving  
588 Abide with Me  
770 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve  
772 When Jesus Came from Nazareth



# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Holy Ministry is given by God out of compassion for his people. Over the next three Sundays we hear Jesus' Missionary Discourse (Matthew 10:5-42). Last Sunday we saw the unworthiness of the servants God calls by mercy. Today the emphasis is still on the Ministry of the Word, but the focus shifts from the servants to the people they serve. We see the compassion and love of God for this world, love so great that he called ministers of the Word to share his grace and mercy and foretell of the coming kingdom of heaven. The Prayer of the Day is Gregorian and fits the Sunday beautifully as it emphasizes how God protects us, empowers us, and sanctifies us through the ministry of the Word that shows us mercy and forgiveness and leads us to the glory of heaven. The Verse of the Day is an excellent match: ministers clothed by God make the saints rejoice!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 9:35—10:8	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Exodus 19:2-8a	Numbers 27:15-23
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 5:6-11	2 Thessalonians 2:16—3:5
<i>Psalm</i>	100	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 9:35—10:8

The compassion of God for the lost and helpless sinner is the reason for Christ's work and the ministry of the Word. The people of Israel had been harassed by their spiritual leaders and left leaderless and helpless. Christ looked upon them and loved them, and then he called the twelve apostles to the ministry of the Word that they might shepherd these lost sheep. The disciples prayed for workers and found God's answer in the twelve men Christ sent out to be leaders of the true Israel and heralds of the coming kingdom. They would go with Jesus' message and Jesus' miracles. They would go by grace to share grace.

## FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 19:2-8A

Only the compassion of God can explain his loving patience and message of grace. To a people who grumbled and doubted and feared and would soon rebel, God sent his servant, Moses. Last week we saw Moses, unworthy though he was, called by God's mercy into ministry. This week we see him practice the words of Jesus: Freely you have received, freely give. God sends Moses back down from the mountain to share the Word of God with the people. Moses' ministry was a blessing from God for the people. He

reminded them of their Savior God who brought them through plagues and the sea, through the desert's drought and famine. Then he called them to follow their God with full devotion. In his compassion God gave them a minister to renew the hearts of his covenant people both for their good and the good of the whole world. This would be the people God used to carry out his greatest act of compassion: the incarnation, death, and resurrection of his Son.

### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 5:6-11**

This is the third of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Pause and contemplate the great love and compassion of God. We cannot fully perceive *deus absconditus*, but we can see his actions. Consider the compassion of God as seen in the sacrifice of Christ for the ungodly world. Christ did not die for good Christian folk. He died for the ungodly, the immoral, the enemies of God who wanted nothing to do with this sacrifice. In short, he died for us, because that is what we were before the grace and mercy of God sought us and found us. Martin Franzmann noted, "Since God has come all the way to us in our rebellious impotence, since the incredible has happened, since we stand acquitted by the atoning blood of Christ, the peace we have with God is peace without end. The wrath of God that looms up at the end of all men's ways to judge them and destroy them, does not loom up at the end of our new way; the Christ looms up, and He will save us from the wrath to come."

### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: NUMBERS 27:15-23**

The context of this lesson is of utmost importance. After forty years of faithfully leading God's people through their wanderings, after much pleading with God in prayer, Moses' hopes of leading the people into the Promised Land were dashed. Moses would see the land from afar, but then like his brother before him, he would die because of his actions at Meribah Kadesh. But look at Moses' response! There is no complaint or murmur or cry. See how this minister of the Word emulates the compassion of God and his Son: Moses' first thought is of the people of God. He saw them as Christ would 1400 years later, as sheep without a shepherd. Leave them not leaderless, O Lord! And God answers with a man full of the Spirit to be the new leader of God's people. Lord, give your Church more ministers who model your compassion!

### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 THESSALONIANS 2:16—3:5**

Paul's words to the Thessalonians center on the ministry of the Word born of God's compassion. The God who loved us also gave us the encouragement of his Word and Sacraments that strengthen us in word and deed. Therefore, Paul beseeches the prayers of the Church for its ministers. Pray that their message be spread and the ministers be spared, for there are those who will work against this ministry and its message. Yet see the compassion of Christ modeled in his ministers: Paul's words are ones of concern and comfort for people of God. Note the juxtaposition of πίστις and Πιστὸς. The solution to the wicked faithlessness of the Church's enemies is the faithfulness of the Lord.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

346 In You Is Gladness

576 Spread, Oh, Spread the Mighty Word

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

120 What Wondrous Love Is This

179 Hail Thee, Festival Day

187 When God the Spirit Came

218 Then the Glory

228 Come, Rejoice before Your Maker

233 All People that on Earth Do Dwell

234 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

252 Oh, Sing to the Lord

313 Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild

431 I Walk in Danger All the Way

438 In God, My Faithful God

440 On Eagles' Wings

492 Son of God, Eternal Savior

525 The Son of God, Our Christ

542 Dear Lord, to Your True Servants Give

548 O Lord, in Prayer You Spent the Night

559 Lord of the Living Harvest

561 Lord, Speak to Us that We May Speak

563 Go Labor On

573 Hark! The Voice of Jesus Crying

576 Spread, Oh, Spread the Mighty Word

578 Saints of God, the Dawn Is Brightening

613 Come, You Thankful People, Come

614 Sing to the Lord of Harvest

733 Rejoice in God

770 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Holy Ministry preaches Christ in spite of persecution. Christ promises courage for his witnesses to testify even in the face of pain or persecution. The Prayer of the Day is one of the most ancient in the Church's use. It seems to have been suggested by the disasters of the dying Western Empire. As Rome crumbled, the Church prayed for God's governance that she might worship in peace and joy. Today Christ reminds us that even when that peace and joy are absent, he will give us the courage to continue to testify in his name.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 10:24-33	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jeremiah 20:7-13	Jeremiah 19:14—20:6
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 5:12-15	Acts 23:1-11
<i>Psalm</i>	31	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 10:24-33

Jesus' axiomatic statements are so obvious that they require no proof. Yet how surprised we are when we face persecution because of the Word! Perhaps we face physical persecution, or perhaps it is merely the way modern Christians are called intolerant, credulous, backward. But why should Christians be surprised or disappointed or angered about the persecutions they face? Look at the axiom! We slaves are not above our master who was persecuted first. So this should not lead to surprise and cannot lead to the cessation of our work as Gospel heralds. We know our master and the reality of who he actually is, not just the falsities his enemies promulgate. And οὐδὲν, therefore, Μὴ φοβηθῆτε αὐτούς—do not be afraid of them! Instead, shout and proclaim! Our enemies can only succeed in killing the body. Such a small thing compared to the fate that awaits them! The enemies of Christ have always been fearsome, whether in the days of the crumbling of the Roman Empire or during these latter days of American hegemony. That's why Christ says it three times, Μὴ φοβηθῆτε. In place of fear, find the courage of Christ to witness in the face of any persecution.

## FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 20:7-13

Persecution can come from any quarter. For Jeremiah, it came from within the visible church. Passhur, the chief officer of the temple, heard the message Jeremiah proclaimed and had him beaten and put into stocks. How telling that the first time the Bible calls Jeremiah by the title "prophet" is also the first time he faces

bodily persecution! Proclaimers of the pure Word of God will always face persecution from without and within the visible church. But what could Jeremiah do? He could not hold in the Word because it was like a fire in his heart. He did his job and found his courage in the mighty warrior of the Lord and the knowledge that God will prevail. In the face of persecution, Jeremiah found courage, praise and joy.

#### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 5:12-15**

This is the fourth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. When the first Adam listened to the Serpent's lies, life and holiness disappeared from God's perfect creation, and into the vacuum left behind rushed sin and death. By one act the first Adam ushered in an age where sin ruled and death reigned. Even the life of mortal man could only be called a life of death deferred. But the second Adam came! By his one epoch-changing act, the life of death deferred became a life of death destroyed. No wonder Satan tries to silence the proclaimers of this message with persecution!

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 19:14—20:6**

This lesson gives the preceding context of the First Lesson. Note the courage of Jeremiah, first in speaking the Word of the Lord that landed him in the stocks, and then speaking the subsequent Word of the Lord as soon as he is released from the stocks. To the man who had beaten him, Jeremiah proclaimed a message of doom and death by God's hand. Pashhur could merely kill the body. So Jeremiah did not fear him, but placed his life in the hands of the God who numbered every hair on his head. In those hands, Jeremiah found the courage to testify in the face of persecution, and even in the midst of it.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ACTS 23:1-11**

St. Paul knew persecution well: he knew how to give it, and he knew how to take it. The man who once had been the Church's worst nightmare had become by God's amazing grace the Church's great Apostle to the Gentiles. But the self-proclaimed chief of sinners, who once persecuted the Church, then endured a ministry filled with persecutions. The list of dangers and violence that Paul faced is lengthy. By the time we find Paul in this lesson he had faced persecutions many times. Yet, his Savior never forgot him, and his Savior never forgot to remind him of the courage he could have in Christ. He was going to Rome, and he would testify. Not even a martyr's death would be able to stop the testimony Paul would make for Christ. What the Lord whispered in the dark, Paul shouted from the rooftop. And when he met his martyr's death, it was only the door to eternity where his Savior acknowledged him before God the Father. Grant us that courage to testify, O Lord!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

188 Creator Spirit, by Whose Aid

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

184 O Holy Spirit, Enter In

187 When God the Spirit Came

202 If God Had Not Been on Our Side

346 In You Is Gladness

347 Jesus! and Shall It Ever Be

349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

378 All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall

396 In Adam We Have All Been One

403 I Know My Faith Is Founded

419 If God Himself Be for Me

435 The Will of God Is Always Best

444 If You But Trust in God to Guide You

445 Through Jesus' Blood and Merit

447 Who Trusts in God, a Strong Abode

448 In You, O Lord, I Put My Trust

472 Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray

559 Lord of the Living Harvest

570 O Christians, Haste

754 The Tree of Life

762 Consider How the Birds Above

# SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Christian loves God above all things. The beautiful Prayer of the Day sets the tone for the Sunday. The Church prays for the love of God that we might always love him above all things. The Verse of the Day describes this total commitment to Christ as denying ourselves and carrying our crosses. The lessons warn of the earthly ramifications of such love, but also point to the promised heavenly rewards.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 10:34-42	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jeremiah 28:5-9	Exodus 32:15-29
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 6:1b-11	1 John 2:15-17
<i>Psalm</i>	89	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 10:34-42

Persecution reprioritizes life and sharpens faith. However, the further Christians get from the lions' roar or the martyr's stake, the easier it is for us to make our faith in Christ merely moderately important in our lives. Family, friends, work, health—these all vie for our time and attention, and our faith gets pushed further and further down the list. When life is not so bad, who needs the promises of a better life to come? How true Luther's words of warning: *nulla persecutio est tota persecutio!* How false our thoughts that faith can be only moderately important! C.S. Lewis said, "Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important." In the Gospel, Christ asserts the all-important nature of faith, and the all-consuming nature of discipleship. Jesus calls us to love him above all—more than family or friends, more than personal safety or even life itself. Such total commitment to Christ will not bring peace to your life, but constant conflict with the sinful world around you. Since he did not come to bring peace, but a sword, he points the Christian to rewards in heaven, kept safe by the One who sent him.

## FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 28:5-9

The false prophet Hananiah proclaimed a message that pleased everyone: within two years the captives and sacred articles would return from Babylon. Even Jeremiah liked the sound of Hananiah's words. He was

quick to add his “Amen” to the concept. However, Jeremiah knew that Hananiah was dead wrong. False preachers have long promised health and wealth to God’s followers. Christianity, however, is not built on a prosperity Gospel, but on the cross for both Christ and Christians. How difficult it must have been for Jeremiah to contradict this false prophet who was saying everything the people wanted to hear! Yet God has called the Christian to love him above all things. Loving God above all means loving God’s Word, even when it’s not what people want to hear. Jeremiah spoke the truth, and God had his back. Jeremiah prophesied that God would stop Hananiah from speaking lies in his name, and within two months the man was dead. Loving God above all brings conflict, but God promises to be with us through it all.

#### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 6:1B-11**

This is the fifth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. In this Sunday’s context, this lesson provides an excellent opportunity to preach on the Fourth Part of Baptism from the Small Catechism: The meaning of baptism for our daily life. The Christian is able to love God above all things because he was buried with Christ through baptism into death. The resurrection to faith created a new man freed from sin and free to live wholly and completely for Christ. Our baptism enables us to love God above all, and it empowers us to do so daily.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 32:15-29**

Aaron had seen God standing on the sapphire pavement. The seventy elders had partaken of a divine banquet on the mountain (Exodus 24). And only forty days later, they lost it all. Unwilling to face conflict for God, they gave in to the people who wanted to love pleasure, flesh, and idols rather than the God who brought them up out of Egypt. Aaron’s feeble excuses remind us of our own shallow rationalizations for failing to love God above all things. The Levites, however, rallied to Moses’ call and showed that they loved the LORD even more than they loved their brothers. Total commitment to God did not bring peace, but a sword. Yet their devotion was rewarded by God who gave them the high privilege of being his special servants.

*Note: If the supplemental First Lesson is used on Pentecost 6, consider using CW’s First Lesson of Exodus 33:12-23 on Pentecost 7. The juxtaposition of these two stories is a striking comparison of the faithlessness of Israel and the faithfulness of Moses and the LORD.*

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 JOHN 2:15-17**

Do not love the world or anything in the world. How easy that is to say; how difficult to do! St. John repeats Christ’s call for total commitment. Love for the world and the love of the Father are mutually exclusive. Loving God above all things means recognizing that our cravings, our lust, and our pride come from this world which will not last. So why do we put our love in things that are so transitory? Empires fall, desire wanes, relationships fail, accomplishments crumble. *Sic transit gloria mundi!* God calls the Christian to love him above all these things and receive a life that will last forever.



**HYMN OF THE DAY**

453 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

32 When Sinners See Their Lost Condition

185 O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace

294 Baptized into Your Name Most Holy

297 Baptized in Water

299 All Who Believe and Are Baptized

301 We Praise You, Lord

355 Take the World, but Give Me Jesus

422 Jesus, Lead Us On

434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart

452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

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

500 For Christian Homes, O Lord, We Pray

525 The Son of God, Our Christ

530 Hark! The Church Proclaims Her Honor

547 We Bid You Welcome in the Name

548 O Lord, in Prayer You Spent the Night

549 Around the Throne, a Glorious Band

550 Behold a Host, Arrayed in White

555 For All Your Saints, O Lord

713 In Silent Pain the Eternal Son

736 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized

737 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It

746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd

755 Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious

Treasure

761 Christ Is with Me

784 O Gracious Lord, with Love Draw Near

# SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Christian finds rest in Jesus. From the beginning of time, God provided rest for his creation. He blessed the seventh day and set it apart, that man might learn to find his rest in God alone. In Jesus, the Christian finds rest from his burdens, rest from his battles, and rest forever in heaven.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 11:25-30	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Exodus 33:12-23	Joshua 23:1-11
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 7:15-25a	Hebrews 4:1-11
<i>Psalm</i>	145	122
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 11:25-30

Though they had seen many signs of Christ's deity, Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum failed to repent. Jesus warned them of the coming wrath. Then he turned to his followers and praised God that the Lord of heaven and earth had revealed the truth of Jesus' identity to the little children who believe in him. He has no words of judgment for his followers. He has only words of invitation, of comfort, of rest. Yes, the rest comes with a yoke—but look at whose yoke it is! Our Savior's humble and gentle heart leads him to give us an easy yoke, a light burden, and rest for our souls. Christianity is not a religion of rules meant to impinge on our freedom; it does not call us to endlessly labor for God's favor; it does not leave us to work things out on our own. No, it frees us from the burden of carrying our sin and puts Christ in its place. It connects us to Jesus that we might learn from him. It gives us the rest our weary souls so desperately need.

## FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 33:12-23

Can you hear the frustration in Moses' voice? Can you sense the worry? Since their great fall with the golden calf, God had refused to go with the people of Israel. He would send an angel, but he himself would not accompany them. Moses pleaded with God to go up to the Promised Land with them. Though the Israelites had sinned greatly, Moses reminded the LORD that they were God's people. God responded in grace and mercy and promised Moses that his very Presence would go with them, and he himself would give Moses rest. Can you hear the confidence in Moses' voice after God's promise? Can you sense the devotion? "Show

me your glory!” Then God took this man yoked to him in faith and in service, and he showed Moses all the glory he could mortally bear.

### SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 7:15-25A

This is the sixth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. The Christian life is a battle between the sinful flesh and the new man born in us through baptism. The Old Adam wages constant war. Where can we find any rest from this kind of fight? Paul’s words ring true in our lives: all the good I want to do, but I fail to accomplish; all the evil I have promised never to do again, but repeat within a day. I want to do good, but I just can’t make it happen! What a wretched person I am! I just want rest from this battle—rest from my failure. Who can save me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, who came to give rest to weary and burdened souls.

John Donne (1572-1631) wrote “A Hymn to God the Father” and expressed the battle, the weariness, and the rest we find in Christ.

1. *Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,  
Which was my sin, though it were done before?  
Wilt Thou forgive that sin, through which I run,  
And do run still, though still I do deplore?  
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,  
For I have more.*

2. *Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I have won  
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?  
Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I did shun  
A year or two, but wallowed in a score?  
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,  
For I have more.*

3. *I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun  
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;  
But swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy Son  
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;  
And having done that, Thou hast done;  
I fear no more.*

### SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JOSHUA 23:1-11

God kept the promise he made in the First Lesson: he had gone with his people to the Promised Land. Many years after finishing the conquest of Canaan, Joshua looked back and reminded the people that God had fought for them and had given them rest from all their enemies. Since God had done this, Joshua called on the people to give the Lord their allegiance, their obedience, and their love. Let the preacher make that same call to God’s people today. We can look back and see that God fought for us and gave us rest from our three great enemies. Now, with sin atoned, the devil defeated, and death vanquished, let all God’s people thank him for this rest by giving him allegiance, obedience, and love.

### SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: HEBREWS 4:1-11

The rest that God gave his people in Canaan foreshadowed the true rest of God in heaven. The rest in the Promised Land was received by some through faith and rejected by others through unbelief. The writer to the Hebrews urges every Christian to heed the warning of the generation that died in the desert. Instead, by faith in Christ, we find the true Sabbath rest of God in heaven.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

419 If God Himself Be for Me

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

214 Jerusalem the Golden

215 Jerusalem, My Happy Home

218 Then the Glory

256 How Great Thou Art

258 Now Let All Loudly

288 The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace

292 The Lord Is God; There Is No Other

313 Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

336 Come unto Me, Ye Weary

338 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

358 How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

372 I Lay My Sins on Jesus

389 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

409 Come, My Soul, with Every Care

411 What a Friend We Have in Jesus

417 I'm But a Stranger Here

422 Jesus, Lead Us On

471 Renew Me, O Eternal Light

519 O God of Love, O King of Peace

522 Grant Peace, We Pray, in Mercy, Lord

551 For All the Saints

616 Feed Your Children, God Most Holy

728 Jerusalem the Golden

745 May the Peace of God

765 Day by Day

783 Stay With Us, Lord, the Sun Descends

# EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Christian is planted by the Word and produces fruit. The Sunday is summarized in the Prayer of the Day which thanks God for the implanting of the Word and asks for the Spirit’s help in producing fruits of faith.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 55:10, 11	Isaiah 55:10-13
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 8:18-25	Acts 18:1-11
<i>Psalm</i>	65	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 13:1-9, 18-23

What a description of Jesus’ ministry! What a description of ours! The Sower scatters the seed of the Gospel to all with no regard for where it might land. Yet most of his seed bears no fruit. This parable brings warning and such comfort. Christ warns us that the seed of the Word faces great opposition from sin, Satan, and the world. Newborn faith can be choked or scorched. The Gospel promise can be snatched from apathetic or misunderstanding soil. Though we sow the seed faithfully and generously, Jesus warns us that most of it will never bear fruit that lasts. Yet for every faithful Gospel preacher, Christ comforts us by showing that the preacher’s job is to sow the seed and leave the growing up to God. He comforts us by pointing to what his Word does in the good soil: it plants great faith that does great things. In the man who hears and understands it, the simple sowing of the Word will produce a crop—a hundred, sixty, or thirty-fold.

*Note: For three Sundays the Gospel features three parables about the kingdom of heaven. Worship planners should note the different aspects of each parable to keep from duplicating themes. In today’s parable we see how the kingdom is bestowed; next Sunday we see how it operates; and finally, we see how it is acquired.*

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 55:10, 11

Though many seeds fall among soil that does not produce fruit, Isaiah gives us God’s promise that his Word will never return to him fruitless (רִיקָם). The Word is like the rain and snow sent from God in heaven that fall to bring blessing upon the earth and make it fruitful. Just as precipitation makes the earth bud and flourish, so God’s Word will always do its work of planting faith in the heart of man and making it fruitful. While this *sedes doctrinae* is often used to illustrate that God’s Word always works, either to convert or to harden, the

flavor of this passage and its context is decidedly positive. Faithful preachers are the mouth of God (Jeremiah 15:19) from which the Word goes forth to do its work of planting faith and making it bear much fruit in the heart of man.

**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:18-25**

This is the seventh in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Paul teaches a lesson on longing for God’s plans to come to fruition. Even creation groans for release from the bondage of sin and longs for the freedom of the children of God. One day, God will make all things new and return creation to the perfection with which he made it. Until then, we preach the Word that plants faith that looks for a better world to come and produces the fruit of hope that lets us wait for it patiently.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 55:10-13**

The supplemental lesson adds two verses to the First Lesson to let the worshipper see the purpose God had in sending forth his Word (v 11). God sends his Word out for our joy and for the LORD’s renown. Intermediately fulfilled in the return from Babylon, God’s promise is ultimately fulfilled in the Holy Christian Church. The Word goes forth to plant faith for the glory of God and the salvation of man.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ACTS 18:1-11**

The field of Corinth was filled with birds and stones and thorns. Though Paul reasoned and preached, one seed after another fell on soil that did not produce a crop. Yet God’s Word would accomplish his good purpose. Paul did not have to go far to find a fertile field. He walked out of the synagogue and went right next door. In the home of Titius Justus he found good soil that produced a crop one hundred times that which was sown.

*Preach you the Word and plant it home  
To those who like or like it not,  
The Word that shall endure and stand  
When flow’rs and mortals are forgot.*

*Though some be snatched and some be scorched  
And some be choked and matted flat,  
The sower sows; his heart cries out,  
“Oh what of that, and what of that?”*

*Preach you the Word and plant it home  
And never faint; the Harvest-Lord  
Who gave the sower seed to sow  
Will watch and tend his planted Word.*

Martin Franzmann (CW 544)

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

324 Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast  
574 May God Bestow on Us His Grace

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

36 A Great and Mighty Wonder  
62 Joy to the World  
255 Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty  
283 Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening  
318 Sent Forth by God's Blessing  
319 On My Heart Imprint Your Image  
320 On My Heart Imprint Your Image  
322 On What Has Now Been Sown

323 Almighty Father, Bless the Word  
364 My Heart Is Longing  
544 Preach You the Word  
568 Good News of God Above  
735 Speak, O Lord  
737 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It  
765 Day by Day  
775 For Builders Bold, Whose Vision Pure

# NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

---

The Christian lives as wheat among weeds as he waits for the harvest. In the Prayer of the Day we ask for the spirit to live like wheat—to think and to do what is right—even while we live in this sinful world. Living with an eye on the coming harvest gives us encouragement, comfort, and hope.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Joel 3:12-16	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 8:26, 27	1 Peter 4:1-8
<i>Psalm</i>	18	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Grant us, Lord, the spirit to think and do what is right that we, who cannot do anything that is good without you, may by your help be enabled to live according to your will; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43

God intended to have a weed-free field of wheat. From the beginning, however, the enemy thwarted his intentions with temptation and sin. How many Christians have seen the evil all around them and pondered the servants' question, "Didn't you sow good seed?" How many churchmen have tried to separate the wheat and weeds in the kingdom with rules or monasteries, with inquisitions or Pharisaical laws? Anyone who tries only succeeds in ruining wheat along with the weeds. They uproot the faith of the weak who fall into sin; they trample the faith of the strong by feeding their pride. The Lord most certainly has a plan to separate the wheat and weeds—just not yet. He has servants standing by to do the work—they're just not us. Instead, God urges his people to live with their eye on the coming harvest. God does not want us to try and separate wheat from weeds before then. Christ tells us to live as wheat among the weeds of this world and wait expectantly for the harvest when the angels will sort it all out: weeds to fire, and wheat to shine as the righteous sons of God in the kingdom of their Father.

## FIRST LESSON: JOEL 3:12-16

The book of Joel foretells the coming of the Day of the Lord. Here in chapter 3, Joel pictures the judgment of the nations as a day of harvest. The day is coming when the sickle will swing and the harvest will begin. Can you imagine the terror that will strike the unbelieving heart when the sun is darkened and the moon and stars fail to shine? Can you imagine the fear when he hears the roaring and thundering of the LORD? Yes, we



live as wheat among weeds, but the harvest is coming. When it does, there will be no need for God’s people to fear. He is their refuge and stronghold.

### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:26, 27**

This is the eighth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Prayer is a gift from God for all believers who are living as wheat among weeds. Surrounded by wickedness, the power and comfort of prayer is a great privilege indeed. Yet it’s a privilege that we so often leave unused or underutilized. Thank God for the gift of the Spirit! The One who called, enlightened, and sanctified us is still at work to overcome our weaknesses. When we don’t know what to pray for, we can know that the Spirit is praying for us.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 PETER 4:1-8**

Living as wheat among weeds means leaving our lives of sin behind and living for the will of God with an eye on the coming harvest. Although righteousness and wickedness must coexist until the judgment, Peter reminded his readers that they had spent enough of their lives living in sin. The time had come for a clean break with the world. Just because we have to live in the world, doesn’t mean we have to be of it. Yes, this break with the world will lead to our persecution. When it happens, fix your eyes on the coming harvest. As you bear up under suffering, take heart and know that all mankind will be judged. The end of all things is near, so live like wheat among the weeds of this world by loving each other deeply with that forgiving love found only in Christ.

### **HYMN OF THE DAY**

541 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide

### **ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

181 Come, Oh, Come, Life-Giving Spirit  
 189 Jehovah, Let Me Now Adore You  
 196 Lord God, to You We All Give Praise  
 205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven  
 207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near  
 208 Great God, What Do I See and Hear  
 221 Blessed Jesus, at Your Word  
 226 To Your Temple I Draw Near  
 291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word  
 337 Delay Not! Delay Not

468 My God, My Father, Make Me Strong  
 472 Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray  
 476 Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower  
 481 O God, Your Hand the Heavens Made  
 523 God of Grace and God of Glory  
 613 Come, You Thankful People, Come  
 723 Holy Spirit, the Dove Sent From Heaven  
 755 Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious  
 Treasure

# TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

---

The Christian seeks spiritual wealth. This Sunday's readings are centered around the very ancient Prayer of the Day. For nearly 1600 years God's people on this day have prayed that God might give them true spiritual wealth. "Teach us always to ask according to your will that we may never fail to obtain the blessings you have promised." What a magnificent prayer for the materialist world in which we live! Our lessons today show people who have come into great wealth, but yet this earthly wealth only serves to illustrate where true treasure lies. Today we see that true, spiritual wealth can only be found in God and his eternal blessings for us in Christ.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 13:44-52	
<i>First Lesson</i>	1 Kings 3:5-12	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 8:28-30	1 Timothy 6:17-21
<i>Psalm</i>	119b	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 13:44-52

Jesus' parables teach us to seek spiritual wealth. Both of the men in the parables found great treasure. For one it was a complete surprise, as unexpected as it was valuable. For the other it came from an expert search by a discerning man. Before they found these new treasures, both men no doubt valued what they previously owned. But once they saw this new treasure, see how little they valued all else they had! The spiritual wealth of Christ and his Gospel puts everything else into perspective; in fact it marginalizes all else. The importance of this truth comes to light in the parable of the net. All people, rich and poor, will be caught up. Only those who found true spiritual wealth are spared the furnace. Jesus concludes with an encouragement for the preacher of the Gospel: you have found true wealth in Christ; you have been given a storeroom full of treasures new and old. Bring them out to God's people with joy and delight.

## FIRST LESSON: 1 KINGS 3:5-12

What would you have asked for? If anything in the world could be yours, what would be your request? God only gave one man the choice between unlimited riches and spiritual wealth. Can you imagine facing his dilemma? What should I pick, temporal blessings or eternal ones? What should I value, the things of this world or the things of God? How well Solomon expressed the words of our Prayer for today, to ask

according to God's will. We marvel at his faith in choosing great wisdom over great riches—especially since we so often fail in the pitifully small choices we make! It's not for all the riches in the world that we turn down spiritual wealth, but for paltry over-time hours, or a little extra in the check book that we shaved off our offering. For such small things we are willing to trade away opportunities for true spiritual wealth. Look at Solomon and see an example of what God means by spiritual wealth. He doesn't mean we need to live as mendicant monks; he doesn't ask us to forgo all earthly treasure. He just doesn't want us to value them more than the pearl of great price. After choosing spiritual treasure, God blessed Solomon in unbelievable ways. (Do the math on the twenty-five tons worth of gold that was part of Solomon's annual income.) Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given you as well.

### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:28-30**

This is the ninth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Paul explains the spiritual wealth that belongs to every Christian. Like the man who found treasure buried in the field, we brought no merit or worth to our calling. Rather, we were chosen. The surprising grace of God found us and gave us the ultimate treasure: predestined, called, justified, and glorified.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-21**

Could Paul's words be more timely or appropriate for this generation? He instructs preachers everywhere to warn the rich about the two pet sins of the wealthy: arrogance and false hope. Mankind so easily falls in the error of thinking that earthly treasures can provide security or a sense of worth. In our affluent society both of those sins run rampant in many a Christian heart. God commands us not to trust in earthly treasure because he wants us to have a firm foundation on which to stand, a certainty on which to place our hope. That can only be found in spiritual wealth. God richly provides for us, and then we give thanks by being rich in good deeds. Spiritual wealth is certain and secure, for it is treasure laid up in heaven. How can we possibly carry out this command? Teach us to ask according to your will that we may never fail to obtain the blessings you have promised.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

418 My God Will Never Leave Me

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

199 In Trembling Hands, Lord God, We Hold  
204 O God, Our Lord, Your Holy Word  
207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near  
208 Great God, What Do I See and Hear  
290 One Thing's Needful  
311 Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness  
325 How Blest Are They Who Hear  
349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure  
386 Now I Have Found the Firm Foundation  
409 Come, My Soul, with Every Care  
414 I Leave All Things to God's Direction  
421 All Depends on Our Possessing  
429 What God Ordains Is Always Good

469 Take My Life and Let It Be  
477 What Is the World to Me  
479 Jesus, Your Boundless Love to Me  
511 O Lord, Our God, Your Gracious Hand  
523 God of Grace and God of Glory  
620 To You, Our God, We Fly  
737 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It  
755 Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious  
Treasure  
757 Where Your Treasure Is  
764 There Is a Time for Everything  
784 O Gracious Lord, with Love Draw Near

# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

---

The Christian trusts God to provide. The Prayer of the Day summarizes the Sunday: God reveals his mighty power chiefly in showing mercy and kindness. God feeds hungry mouths and hungry souls with his gifts of grace. When we bring our problems to Jesus, he will richly supply all we need.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 14:13-21	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 55:1-5	Genesis 41:41-49
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 8:35-39	1 Timothy 4:4-5
<i>Psalm</i>	42-43	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 14:13-21

Though saddened by the Baptist's death and seeking solitude, Jesus had compassion on the crowds that followed him and healed their sick. Then he turned to the training of his disciples. "Give them something to eat," he told them (Mark 6:37). The disciples, however, saw all of the problems and none of the possibilities. They could estimate how many months' wages it would cost; they could tally the measly resources on hand. Their math didn't fail them, but their faith did. They did not begin to understand what kind of Lord they had in Jesus. Jesus taught them that a Christian trusts in God to provide when he said, "Bring them here to me!" They should have done immediately; it should be our first response to want or crisis. Bring it to Jesus. And look how he answered! So much food that thousands were fed and there were bushels left over. Here, the Son of God showed that he even cares for the physical needs of his people. Trust in God to provide!

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 55:1-5

God's care for our physical needs is coupled with his care for our spiritual needs. He wants to fill not only empty bellies but also hungry hearts and thirsty souls. "Come" is his invitation; "all" is the guest list; "free" is the cost. What hungry or thirsty soul would turn down his call? Those who come he fills with spiritual food. As richly as he fed the 5000, so richly he feeds his people with the Gospel, pure and free.

**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 8:35-39**

This is the tenth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Though we suffer much in this world, the Christian trusts that nothing can separate him from the love of God. In his providence, God provides for us; in his love, God protects us. Though we are considered sheep for the slaughter by the world, we know that in the hand of our God we are more than conquerors, inseparable from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. No earthly powers, no spiritual forces, nothing in our past or in our future has the power to remove us from the care of our God.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 41:41-49**

A Christian trusts that God will provide—even when the plan makes no sense to us. Sold as a slave by his brothers, Joseph could have despaired of God’s care and love. In faith, however, Joseph trusted in God to provide for his needs and his future. Year after year, God did just that and raised Joseph from the depths of prison to dizzying heights of power. By the age of 30 he controlled one of the greatest empires the world has known. And it was all so God could provide for his people. He used Joseph as his tool to fill the granaries during the seven fat years that he might give bread to the people during the seven lean. So great was God’s blessing that they stopped counting the grain! The grace in God’s provision can be seen not only in the thousands of Egyptians saved from starvation, but most especially in the grain he provided to Jacob and his sons during the famine. Though he was sold as a slave, God made Joseph vizier that he might be God’s hand providing food to preserve the bloodline of the Savior. How often we look at our lives and see only problems and none of the possibilities that God would work in us and through us! Look at Joseph and learn again to trust God to provide.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 1 TIMOTHY 4:4-5**

The Gnostic heretics believed the physical world was evil. They demanded an ascetic life that was at odds with God’s intentions for our existence. Paul asserts that God not only cares about our physical existence, but everything we need for it is, in fact, a creation of God and essentially good—not evil. Rather than a life of denial, the Christian life is one of gratefully receiving all that we need as gracious gifts from God.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

214 Jerusalem the Golden

258 Now Let All Loudly

304 Jesus Sinners Does Receive

332 Go, My Children, with My Blessing

337 Delay Not! Delay Not

338 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

339 Today Your Mercy Calls Us

353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

364 My Heart Is Longing

395 Seek Where You May to Find a Way

410 Our Father, Who from Heaven Above

432 I Am Jesus' Little Lamb

445 Through Jesus' Blood and Merit

465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

480 Almighty Father, Heaven and Earth

482 Forgive Us, Lord

511 O Lord, Our God, Your Gracious Hand

565 There Still Is Room

728 Jerusalem the Golden

# TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Christian answers doubt with faith. Doubt is the unfortunate companion of faith. Wherever faith clings to the promises of God, doubt is always right there lingering in the back of our mind, constantly asking the serpent's Garden question, "Did God really say?" How striking to think that we must have faith in God before we can doubt him! Today's lessons show us believers who had faith in God and his abilities to save them, but yet doubted when his plans or purpose failed to match theirs. In each case, it is adversity that fights against faith and allows its unfortunate companion to rear its ugly head. And in each case, the true answer to doubt is not found in the great miracle that removes adversity, but in the still small voice of our Savior God whispering in his Word. Today we hear our Savior God ask us, "Why did you doubt?", and we see that the Christian answers doubt with faith.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 14:22-33	
<i>First Lesson</i>	1 Kings 19:9-18	Exodus 14:10-31
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 9:1-5	James 1:2-8, 12
<i>Psalm</i>	73	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 14:22-33

Doubt and faith rose and fell like the waves of the sea that dark night. The evangelist paints a picture of frantic effort against a storm with little progress. Then Jesus came—and note the way he came! He did not simply appear among them, as he could have. He did not fly or float. He walked on the water. The very thing they had been fighting, the water that threatened to take their life, Jesus walked on it like it was dry ground. What a Savior we have that walks on the waters of all our greatest fears! See the faith in the disciples grow! See Peter show it in his own miraculous walk. But, all too often, doubt is the unfortunate companion of faith. Though Jesus was standing on the water, Peter feared it. What pulls our eyes of faith away from Jesus? What are the waves and wind in our lives that make us doubt him? To Peter, Jesus asked, "Why did you doubt?" He gave no answer. What could he say? With Jesus there is never any need to doubt. How sad that we so often do! Rather, let us focus on the Savior and watch our faith swell as the disciples' did when their



doubts vanished, and they gave the greatest evidence of faith: they worshipped that man from Nazareth for what he truly was, the Son of God.

#### **FIRST LESSON: 1 KINGS 19:9-18**

Elijah's great victory of faith was followed closely by great adversity. From the heights of Mt. Carmel, Elijah fell into the depths of frustration. Even after such a great display of God's glory, this evil queen issued her death threats. Even after such a powerful display of God's might, a general spiritual renewal did not occur. Elijah had faith in God's power, but he doubted when God's plans and purpose did not match his own. Hadn't the people broken the covenant? Why didn't God come and make things right with earthquake, wind, and the fire of judgment? Elijah went to the site where the covenant had been made, to the mountain of God where God had come once before in fire and wind and earthquake. There Elijah brought his case against the people of Israel. God answered his prophet not with great acts of power, but rather with quiet words of promise. God displayed all of his power, so that his display of grace might be all the more astounding. He would not come in judgment, but in grace for his elect. The still small voice of his message would accomplish all that he desired. It would tear down kingdoms and establish dynasties. It would bring judgment on his enemies and reserve a people for himself. Elijah heard the Word of God and had to wonder, "Why did I doubt?"

#### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 9:1-5**

This is the eleventh in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Paul explains the roots of the Christian Church. He speaks of his brothers, the children of Israel, and asks them, "Why did you doubt? Why did you doubt that salvation is by grace, not by works? Why did you doubt the Messiah long promised was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth?" The unbroken line of God's acts of grace left Israel no reason to doubt. Yet they did. And God's answer to that doubt? He chose a remnant by grace and spoke to them in the gentle whisper of God made man.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 14:10-31**

The children of Israel during their great exodus aptly displayed that doubt is the unfortunate companion of faith. As they made their way from Egypt to Canaan, they scurried back and forth between the poles of faith and doubt with alarming regularity. Faith had led them to follow Moses and the Pillar into the desert. Now, however, with the sea in front of them and a great army behind them, faith fled and doubt reigned. Adversity made them forget the God of the Passover. Moses came with words so fitting for doubting hearts in the face of adversity, "You need only be still." As the psalmist said, "Be still and know that I am God." God's plan will prevail. The very water they thought was preventing their escape would in fact be the cause of their deliverance. The very army they thought would destroy them would in fact be destroyed. The troubles that seem to afflict us or hem us in, are, in fact, part of the plan for the glory of God and the salvation of man. It is only after the parted sea finds its former home that we recognize the grace of God's hand in our lives. And we hear the gentle whisper of our Savior God, "Why did you doubt?"

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: JAMES 1:2-8, 12**

The trials we face in this sinful world can make us terrified like the disciples, or frustrated like Elijah, or despondent like the children of Israel before the sea. James calls us out as living like double-minded men when we doubt our God. He preaches a law to hearts that need to hear it: “Do not doubt!” But God promises that in the midst of the storms of life, we can listen and also hear his gentle whisper. “It is I. Don’t be afraid!” When we hear his voice, the waves of doubt recede and faith finds its place again, making us once more sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

- 379 Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound
- 384 By Grace I’m Saved

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven           | 431 I Walk in Danger All the Way               |
| 251 When Morning Gilds the Skies            | 433 Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me                    |
| 315 Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face | 434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart         |
| 346 In You Is Gladness                      | 439 Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me             |
| 349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure               | 447 Who Trusts in God, a Strong Abode          |
| 353 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness  | 451 Precious Lord, Take My Hand                |
| 354 Lamb of God, We Fall before You         | 517 Almighty Father, Strong to Save            |
| 357 Jesus, Lover of My Soul                 | 522 Grant Peace, We Pray, in Mercy, Lord       |
| 364 My Heart Is Longing                     | 552 By All Your Saints Still Striving          |
| 405 Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink    | 617 Christ, by Heavenly Hosts Adored           |
| 415 Be Still, My Soul                       | 711 Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure Eternal |
| 416 How Firm a Foundation                   | 768 How Firm a Foundation                      |
| 418 My God Will Never Leave Me              | 779 I Sing as I Arise Today                    |
| 422 Jesus, Lead Us On                       | 786 The Song of Moses                          |
| 428 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me    |  |

# THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Church is meant for all people. The Prayer of the Day reminds us that it is only by God’s gift of grace that we come into his presence to offer true and faithful service. Today’s lessons teach that the gift of grace given to Israel, God also intended to give *through* Israel to the world. The Church is meant for all people: a display of God’s mercy and a result of the living and active Word of God.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 15:21-28	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 56:1, 6-8	Joshua 2:8-21
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 11:13-15, 28-32	
<i>Psalm</i>	133-134	142
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 15:21-28

Note the context of chapter 15. The children of Israel—and especially their religious leaders—found nothing but fault in Jesus of Nazareth. The chosen people of God to whom belonged the patriarchs, the promises, the covenant and the temple, could see nothing in Christ but a breaker of man-made traditions. Jesus’ words to them could not be harsher. They were the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy: their outward rites and rituals belied an inward spiritual emptiness. The very people who should have been closest to Christ were most distant. So Jesus distances himself from them and goes to the Gentile land of ancient paganism, Tyre and Sidon. There he finds a most inexplicable thing: the Greek text notes it as both surprising and extraordinary: ἰδοὺ γυνή Χαναναία. After leaving the land of God’s chosen people, Jesus finds a woman—a Canaanite woman—who received the Word of God and trusted in God’s promises in a way that shamed every one of the religious teachers. The male leaders of God’s people failed to recognize him, but behold! Look carefully! A woman, a Canaanite woman, cries out, “*Kyrie eleison!*” And to whom does she cry? She called him “Lord, Son of David,” with all of its messianic implications. How amazing is the grace of God that chooses the weak and lowly things of the world to shame the wise and proud. Only twice are we told that Jesus called someone’s faith great. Both were Gentiles, and both exhibited a God-given trust in the Word and promises of God made man.

**FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 56:1, 6-8**

The words of this lesson came to the mind and mouth of our Savior when he confronted the gross perversion of temple worship in Mark 11. Through Isaiah God told the world that God-fearing Gentiles would always have a place within his temple. Yet in his temple on earth, the religious leadership turned the court of Gentiles into a marketplace that robbed both man and God. Jesus cleansed it of both the commerce and corruption and quoted this lesson. The godly Gentiles described are the exact opposite of the Jews in Matthew 15. God in his grace calls the Gentiles into his presence and makes his Church a house of prayer for all nations.

**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 11:13-15, 28-32**

This is the twelfth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. On this day celebrating faith for the Gentiles, St. Paul warns his Gentile readers against any pride on their part or prejudice against the Jews. Note the point of this Apostle to the Gentiles: he reaches out to the Gentile with the hopes of also winning the Jew. Verse 15 makes the point of our Gospel lesson. Rejection by the people of Israel meant Christ would be preached to the Gentiles. How personal this statement is for Paul! How many synagogues had he preached in, only to be cast out and make his way to the Gentiles? But yet Israel retains its dual status: enemies that are beloved. When the nation of Israel turned from its Savior God and his Messiah, God set his face against them as enemies of the Gospel. But yet God's call and his Word of promise remain. Such is grace, that God does not love the lovable, but makes the unlovable his dear possession. Just look at what he did with the disobedient Gentiles! Both Jew and Gentile apart from Christ languish in the fearful prison called "Disobedience." God shut them up together that locked thus, all hope and all self-help were gone. Disobedience was all they had and all they could bring forth. Only one door permits one to leave this prison, and it is inscribed: "God's Mercy." (R.C.H. Lenski)

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JOSHUA 2:8-21**

It is reasonable that spies would hide themselves in a house of prostitution. It is reasonable, too, that this prostitute Rahab tried to cut a deal to preserve her life in the face of the Israelite onslaught that the whole city knew was coming. But what reason is there that she did it out of faith in the LORD? What reason did she find to have faith in the God of free and faithful love? There is no reason for that but the unreasonable gift of God worked in her heart by the living and active Word of God. Clearly, God meant his Church to be for all people. But he didn't stop there! What reason could there be that this foreign woman, this prostitute from a godless country, that hers would be the womb through which line of the Blessed Seed would descend? There is no reason for that at all. That can only be grace. Grace meant for all people.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

413 When in the Hour of Utmost Need

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

251 When Morning Gilds the Skies  
266 Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above  
305 From Depths of Woe I Cry to You  
357 Jesus, Lover of My Soul  
395 Seek Where You May to Find a Way  
402 My Faith Looks Up to Thee  
403 I Know My Faith Is Founded  
404 Faith Is a Living Power from Heaven  
405 Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink  
425 Oh, Sing, My Soul, Your Maker's Praise

448 In You, O Lord, I Put My Trust  
494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds  
521 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace  
534 In the Midst of Earthly Life  
539 In Christ There Is No East or West  
570 O Christians, Haste  
571 From Greenland's Icy Mountains  
577 Rise, O Light of Gentile Nations  
756 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight  
773 In Unity and Peace

# FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Church will stand forever. Nothing can keep our Redeemer from upholding his promised salvation. Neither false expectations nor the gates of hell, neither an Egyptian army nor a flowing river, not even the great tribulation of the end times will keep our God from preserving his Church.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 16:13-20	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Exodus 6:2-8	Joshua 4:1-9
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 11:33-36	Revelation 7:1-8
<i>Psalm</i>	34	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.  
Alleluia. (1 Timothy 1:10b)

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 16:13-20

Who do people say the Son of Man is? That question is as applicable today as it was in Matthew's Gospel. The question remains, "Who is Jesus?" As the disciples rattled off the popular misconceptions, one is struck by how illustrious that list actually was. There were no slouches in that group. But they didn't even begin to compare with the truth. Many people today give similar answers: they call Jesus a teacher, a philosopher, the founder of a religion, an agent of change. Their answers miss the mark as widely as the answers of the people in the Gospel. Only disciples of Jesus, through the work of the Spirit of God, can confess him as he truly is. Could Peter's answer be any better? *You are the Anointed One, the one set apart by God and prophesied by Scripture, the Promised Seed who would save us from sin.* But even more than that, Peter showed that the disciples confessed him to be the Son of the living God. *You, Jesus of Nazareth, are the Son of the God who is life and who gives life.* This living God is the hope of every sinful man ever since Adam in the face of death named his wife "Life," because through her womb would come the Seed who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Now here, in the flesh, stood the Son of the living God whose mission was to restore life to this world of death. This truth is the rock on which the Church stands. Because it stands on the rock and not on the pebbles of men who serve it, the Church will stand forever: its message is changeless; the ramifications of its work are eternal.

*Note: The preacher will note that this passage has been used by the Roman Catholic Church to extend its tyranny over souls. A study of Πέτρος and πέτρα is in place to dispel the Roman error that both refer to*

*Simon. The singular pronouns in verse 19 are resolved in Matthew 18:18. The Reformers studied and wrote much regarding these verses and the Keys.*

#### **FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 6:2-8**

To a people who wanted to know who God was, he responded, “I AM who I AM.” In this lesson he explains exactly what it means to be the LORD, the God of free and faithful love. It means that he is the living God who will preserve his Church forever. Why and how does he preserve it? God gives a striking answer by referring to himself 21 times in seven verses. The God of free and faithful love will redeem his people. And because our redemption is not based on our obedience, but on him and his faithfulness, his power and his grace, it is a covenant that cannot be shaken or removed. God will preserve his Church forever. How can we be certain? Look at the simple promise that brackets our lesson. “I am the LORD.”

#### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 11:33-36**

This is the thirteenth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Note the preceding context that falls outside of this lesson. Romans 11:25-27 remembers the covenant with Israel. Isaiah prophesied it. God fulfilled it. “This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” The living God preserves his Church forever by remembering his covenant. How can man respond to the illogical nature of grace? Only with awe; only with praise. Here Paul records a great doxology fit for our Redeemer God. The depth of his wisdom, his unsearchable judgments, his limitless grace in Christ—that truth is the rock on which the Church will stand forever. Worship him with awe! Praise him with joy!

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JOSHUA 4:1-9**

Twelve rocks told the story God’s grace and preservation to generations of his people. Through the Word, they still speak to us today. As he once used his might to halt a river in its place to preserve his people, so today God still preserves and protects the new Israel, his Holy Church. Today, rocks still speak. Not stones in a river, but people like Peter, little rocks who proclaim the Rock on which we stand forever.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: REVELATION 7:1-8**

God doesn’t just hold back rivers, but he even holds back the winds of destruction until every one of his elect is safely sealed. Ezekiel 9 gives an interesting prophesy of such a seal. The believers are marked with the Hebrew letter *Taw*. It’s intriguing to think of the image that would have formed in the mind of the people of Israel. The Hebrew script at the time would have marked each forehead with † or + or X. Thus sealed with the seal of the living God, the whole Church is preserved forever ( $12^2 \times 10^3 = 144,000$ . The number of the Church is 12; the number of completeness is 10; multiplication intensifies the symbolism).

*Note: This lesson provides the opportunity to address the popular misinterpretations of this text. Besides the symbolic numbers, the list itself is symbolic. Nowhere else does the Bible list the tribes in this way. Levi is never counted among the tribes, but is here. Joseph is listed, but so is Manasseh, while the more important Ephraim is not. Dan is omitted altogether. Judah is raised to its soteriological position of primacy. This is not a listing of the children of Israel, but a picture of the true Israel of God, the Holy Christian Church.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

17 God's Own Son Most Holy

184 O Holy Spirit, Enter In

226 To Your Temple I Draw Near

239 Glory Be to God the Father

308 As Surely As I Live, God Said

335 O Kingly Love, that Faithfully

368 O Savior, Precious Savior

382 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

399 To God Be the Glory

403 I Know My Faith Is Founded

420 God Moves in a Mysterious Way

438 In God, My Faithful God

445 Through Jesus' Blood and Merit

529 Built on the Rock

537 Onward, Christian Soldiers

538 The Church's One Foundation

552 By All Your Saints Still Striving

560 I Hear the Savior Calling

596 Let Me Be Yours Forever

621 For Years on Years of Matchless Grace

709 Christ, Your Footprints through the Desert

739 Baptismal Waters Cover Me

742 What Is This Bread



# FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Church is militant: first the cross, then the crown. The Prayer and Verse of the Day center the lessons. Today Christ tells us that for him and for us, going God's way means death must come before life. He calls on us to deny ourselves and follow him on the way of the cross. Those words offend our sinful flesh and make our Old Adam cry with Peter, "Never!" They make us accuse God with Jeremiah. So today the Church prays for the never-failing mercy of Christ that we might avoid such wicked and harmful thoughts and instead be guided on the cross-laden path to salvation. Then, and only then, do these words of Christ cease offending our flesh and become a joy and delight for our heart (Verse of the Day).

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 16:21-26	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Jeremiah 15:15-21	Judges 16:22-31
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 12:1-8	Galatians 6:12-16
<i>Psalm</i>	121	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Your words became a joy to me, and the delight of my heart. Alleluia. (Jeremiah 15:16 cf. RSV)

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 16:21-26

Peter's great confession from last Sunday's Gospel showed the disciples understood who Jesus was. But though they understood his person, they still failed to understand his work. He had come to fulfill the redemptive mission for which he was anointed; he had not come to fulfill Israel's earthbound views of Messiah. He couldn't be the Messiah they wanted, and still be the Savior they needed. "He must go..." Cross and death were necessary first. When Jesus spoke most clearly about his cross, Peter spoke Satan's words of compromise. Thanks be to God that our Savior saw the necessity of the cross before the crown! Now for Christian followers, cross comes before the crown as well. We die to self, but gain Christ, the Life.

## FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 15:15-21

The church is militant, and that means dying to self and the things of man. After a hard ministry, Jeremiah began to forget the things of God and concentrate too much on the things of man. The prophet Jeremiah struggled to carry the cross given him by his God. God's Word was a joy and delight to his heart, but Jeremiah's life had been anything but joy and delight. After bearing much persecution, God's prophet finally tired of self-denial. He wondered whether God's promises amounted to nothing, but were as failed and fruitless as a dried-up brook in times of drought. How does God respond? Does he remove the cross and

persecution? No, he commands his prophet to repent and turn to God for mercy. Then, God will permit him again the privilege of carrying a cross in his name. God renews a promise that he had made at the beginning of Jeremiah’s ministry. He didn’t promise to remove the persecution, but to make Jeremiah strong enough to take it. May God make each of us bronze walls, certain of the fact that even as we follow the way of the cross—no, especially as we follow the way of the cross—our God is with us to rescue and save us, and redeem us from the grasp of the cruel. That knowledge renewed and restored Jeremiah to a ministry centered on the things of God as he served in the Church militant.

#### **SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 12:1-8**

This is the fourteenth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Jesus did not heed Satan’s temptation or Peter’s command. He denied himself and carried his cross to the hill of his death and our eternal life. Through that one act of righteousness, God gave justification that brings life to all mankind. St. Paul spends eleven chapters outlining the amazing nature of God’s plan for our salvation centered on our crucified Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Then in chapter 12, Paul begins, “Therefore...” He points back to the past eleven chapters and says, *In view of all that—in view of everything God did to save you eternally...let death come before life for you. First the cross, then the crown. Offer your bodies as living sacrifices.* This oxymoron only makes sense in the Christian response of life lived by dying to self and living for Christ.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JUDGES 16:22-31**

*What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?* Jesus’ words of warning form a perfect picture of Samson. He had the world: strength, fame, power, leadership, love. Yet he was losing his soul. But the God of grace humbled him. Samson repented and took up his cross and followed. He lost his life, but died in faith. His words comprise the most fervent plea that a sinner can make at the end of life. Like the thief, he cried, “Remember me!” Once again a man of faith, he had in mind the things of God rather than men and died in service to his Savior God.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: GALATIANS 6:12-16**

Christians will be tempted to give in to license or legalism in order to escape persecution. But Christ told us to expect persecution and burdens that come from carrying his cross. For the Christian, bearing the cross is a point of pride and the basis for our boasting. How can this be? We are the Church militant, and so death comes before life, the cross before the crown. By the cross the world dies to us, and we die by that same cross to the world. But after that death comes life—new life—an entirely new creation.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

465 Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

70 Help Us, O Lord, for Now We Enter  
125 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross  
186 O Spirit of Life, O Spirit of God  
259 When All Your Mercies, O My God  
345 In the Cross of Christ I Glory  
355 Take the World, but Give Me Jesus  
396 In Adam We Have All Been One  
422 Jesus, Lead Us On  
428 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me  
430 Evening and Morning  
431 I Walk in Danger All the Way  
434 Lord, You I Love with All My Heart  
452 Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus  
453 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke  
463 Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult  
466 Though Thoughtless Thousands Choose  
469 Take My Life and Let It Be  
477 What Is the World to Me

481 O God, Your Hand the Heavens Made  
483 Lord of All Good  
484 Brothers, Sisters, Let Us Gladly  
488 Savior, Thy Dying Love  
526 We Are Your People  
527 Weary of All Trumpeting  
529 Built on the Rock  
536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head  
537 Onward, Christian Soldiers  
549 Around the Throne, a Glorious Band  
566 We All Are One in Mission  
579 Lift High the Cross  
701 Zion, at Your Shining Gates  
735 Speak, O Lord  
761 Christ Is With Me  
772 When Jesus Came from Nazareth  
784 O Gracious Lord, with Love Draw Near

# SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Church fulfills her role as her brother's keeper. The privilege, responsibility and importance of this task all rest in the words from our Gospel lesson that follow Jesus' divine directive, "I tell you the truth..." The keys of the kingdom have been placed in our hands. It is our privilege and responsibility to bind and to loose—to be our brother's keeper—because Christ has appointed the Church to carry out that task on his behalf. Note carefully today's emphasis as opposed to next Sunday's to keep from duplicating themes. Next Sunday deals with forgiving our neighbor as God forgave us. While forgiveness is inherent in Christian discipline, today we note the work of the Christian and the Church to reach out with Law and Gospel for the sake of the fallen brother.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 18:15-20	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Ezekiel 33:7-11	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 13:1-10	Galatians 2:11-21
<i>Psalm</i>	51a	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 18:15-20

"Matthew 18" has become shorthand for Christian discipline. This Sunday provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that shorthand has not become short shrift. The importance of Christian discipline lies in the fact that the keys have been placed into the hands of the Church and in no other. The Christian and the Church are a fallen sinner's only life line. Satan tries to make Christian discipline seem like the height of hypocrisy or meddling. But his is a self-interested motive: he wants the fallen brother's sins bound like his for an eternity in hell. Only love could lead the Christian and the Church to go to a fallen brother. Only love led our Savior to command it. Even the manner Jesus prescribes shows great love for the fallen. First, privately, so that offense and embarrassment might be contained, and pardon and forgiveness might all the more readily flow. Then with two or three, that the matter might be underscored without making tongues wag throughout the congregation. Finally, also in love, the Church calls and, if necessary, shuns. Such a great privilege and power has Christ bestowed on us! It leads us to even greater reliance on prayer for guidance and the presence of our Savior among us.

**FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 33:7-11**

Since the time of Cain, man has hated being his brother's keeper. Are we any different today? Who but little Pharisees enjoy pointing out others' sins? But God tells us the task is not optional. No one wants to wake up their next door neighbor at 6:00am on a Saturday. But if his house were burning, and you let him sleep, you are not just loveless and careless. You are a killer. In the same way God drops on us the heavy message of being a watchman for our brother. God's judgment on fallen man is as clear as it is severe. If we fail to do the job God has assigned us, God promises to hold us accountable. With the Law driven deeply into our hearts, God then reminds us why he has given us this job: because of his grace and his desire for the salvation of all mankind. The responsibility of waking our neighbor asleep in a burning house becomes a joyful privilege when he emerges safely from the smoke. May our task of being our brother's keeper always be one done with such responsibility and joy.

**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 13:1-10**

This is the fifteenth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Paul takes up the issue of government and the Christian's relationship to it. A Christian is a citizen of two kingdoms. The first part of this text is the definitive section of Scripture on our role as citizens of an earthly kingdom. Yet the latter part of this lesson best fits with the theme for the day. We owe our neighbor a debt of love. Keeping the commandments fulfills the law of love. "Love does no harm to its neighbor." Today's lessons point out that doing harm to our neighbor also means failing to do what God tells us in his regard: being his keeper.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: GALATIANS 2:11-21**

Being your brother's keeper will lead at times to uncomfortable situations or even confrontations. Here Paul tells how he had to oppose Peter to his face. Paul did not do this out of jealousy of this reputed pillar; this was no power play pitting the Apostle to the Jews against the Apostle to the Gentiles. This had to do with the eternal salvation of everyone involved. Trusting in anything other than Christ is like sleeping in a burning house. Paul took his job of being a watchman seriously: if righteousness could be gained through the Judaizers' demands, then Christ died for nothing! So Paul woke his sleeping neighbor with the harsh reality of Peter's hypocrisy. But the Word did its work; Paul didn't merely keep his brother, he won his brother over.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

304 Jesus Sinners Does Receive  
521 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

226 To Your Temple I Draw Near	493 Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive
230 Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now	494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds
286 The Law Commands and Makes Us Know	521 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace
308 As Surely As I Live, God Said	526 We Are Your People
386 Now I Have Found the Firm Foundation	529 Built on the Rock
391 God Loved the World So that He Gave	532 God Is Here! As We His People
393 If Your Beloved Son, O God	617 Christ, by Heavenly Hosts Adored
398 Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults	620 To You, Our God, We Fly
410 Our Father, Who from Heaven Above	738 In Hopelessness and Near Despair
446 I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus	752 In Christ Alone
454 I Gave My Life for Thee	761 Christ Is With Me
490 Love in Christ Is Strong and Living	

# SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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The Church forgives as God forgives. Anytime we try to imitate God, we quickly realize our inadequacy. Yet today God tells us to model our forgiveness on his: a boundless, free, and loving forgiveness based on the sacrifice of Christ. How could our sinful hearts ever forgive like that? The Prayer of the Day asks that the mercy and grace of God precede us and follow after us, that we might love God with undivided hearts—hearts always ready to forgive as God does: sins are forgiven, forgotten, forever.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 18:21-35	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Genesis 50:15-21	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Romans 14:5-9	Ephesians 4:29—5:2
<i>Psalm</i>	103	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 18:21-35

"The human animal is not...good at forgiveness. Forgiveness is not some innate, natural human emotion. It is natural for the human animal to defend itself, to snarl and crouch into a defensive position when attacked, to howl when wronged, to bite back when bitten. Forgiveness is not natural." (Willimon) Forgiveness must be learned, and Peter thought he had figured it out. From the elders of the Jews Peter had heard: "If a man transgresses one time, forgive him. If a man transgresses two times, forgive him. If a man transgresses three times, forgive him. If a man transgresses four times, do not forgive him." Three times, the elders said, was the limit of forgiveness for a good Jew. Peter, however, was willing to go much further; not three times, but seven times, Peter thought with a smile. Until Jesus said, "Not seven times, Peter, seventy times seven—what the elders say doesn't matter. *I say to you* that your forgiveness should have no limit, but be like God's." Jesus' parable contrasts the forgiveness of God and our own unforgiving nature. The servant's debt— by any measure of calculation—was impossibly high (perhaps 150,000 years' wages). Who could have accrued debt such as this? Who could ever hope to repay? What an arresting picture of our debt of sin before God! The greatness of the debt magnifies the compassion of the king who wipes the debt away. Who can comprehend the forgiveness of God? Certainly not unmerciful servants like us, who refuse to forgive the small debts owed to us, and instead, inflict on our fellow servants the punishments that God should rightly have given us. Have mercy on us, Lord, and teach us to forgive like you!

**FIRST LESSON: GENESIS 50:15-21**

How hard it is to forgive like God! We may forgive someone who hurts us, but we never forget. We harbor that hurt deep inside of us for years—never understanding that we are locking ourselves in the prison of the past. Joseph’s brothers feared that they would finally have to pay for what they did to Joseph. His father was gone; he was still in charge in Egypt; and the brothers thought that they were going to face Joseph’s vengeance. As repentant sinners, we often act like the brothers and wait for God to get even with us for our past sins. Shame on us! We are making God as shallow as we are! In God’s eyes our sins are forgiven, forgotten, forever. Joseph wept at their words as he remembered the sordid history and all the emotions that came with it. He wept, but he was free from the prison of the past; he had forgiven his brothers their terrible deeds. Through his tears, Joseph never wavered, but he calmed his brothers’ fears, forgave them like God forgives, and set them free from their prison of the past.

**SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 14:5-9**

This is the last in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Christ set us free from the burdens of the Law; in the Gospel we have the freedom of sons. With freedom, though, comes responsibility. Our Christian freedom must be normed by love for our neighbor. I am certainly free to eat or drink, but my eating and drinking doesn’t happen in a vacuum. My Christian freedom is not freedom to enslave a weaker brother’s conscience. We are bound to our brothers because we both belong to Christ. Therefore let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (v.19). Restricting my freedom out of love for my brother is service to Christ that pleases God and brings righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (v. 17).

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: EPHESIANS 4:29—5:2**

Paul commands us not to act like the unmerciful servant, but rather: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” The Church is comprised of people who have been sealed for redemption, so let’s act like it! Not only kindness and compassion, but forgiveness is the primary mark of the Christian. We forgive because God forgave us in Christ. That makes us μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, imitators of God. Every Old Testament sacrificial victim pointed ahead to the death of Christ, the fragrant offering and the atoning sacrifice that won our forgiveness and inspires our forgiveness for others.



**HYMN OF THE DAY**

493 Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

82 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

109 When O'er My Sins I Sorrow

117 O Dearest Jesus

234 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

238 Oh, Bless the Lord, My Soul

257 My Soul, Now Bless Your Maker

297 Baptized in Water

303 With Broken Heart and Contrite Sigh

305 From Depths of Woe I Cry to You

306 Before You, God, the Judge of All

317 O Lord, We Praise You

359 Jesus, My Great High Priest

383 Blessed Are They, Forever Blest

384 By Grace I'm Saved

385 Chief of Sinners Though I Be

389 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

392 Not unto Us

393 If Your Beloved Son, O God

420 God Moves in a Mysterious Way

490 Love in Christ Is Strong and Living

491 O Master of the Loving Heart

521 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace

534 In the Midst of Earthly Life

592 All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night

593 Now the Light Has Gone Away

615 We Thank You for Your Blessings

760 When Peace, like a River

764 There Is a Time for Everything

# EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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What is our God like? Over the next four Sundays, the Church hears Jesus tell four parables which reveal characteristics of our God. Today's lessons cause the worshiper to ask: Is God fair? No, he's not. He doesn't give us what we deserve, and that's called mercy. In fact, he gives us what we don't deserve, and that's called grace. Our God is inconceivably gracious.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 20:1-16	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 55:6-9	Jonah 4:5-11
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Philippians 1:18b-27	Romans 9:6b-16
<i>Psalm</i>	27	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 20:1-16

What is our God like? Jesus teaches us with a story, but we struggle with the lesson. The parable offends our finely honed sense of what's fair and what's not. Note the context: the disciples had just asked what they would receive in the kingdom, and Jesus promised them twelve thrones. Then he immediately quashes any prideful thoughts by saying that in the kingdom of heaven, God makes no distinction by merit or work (*For the kingdom of heaven is like...*). In reality, God is not fair; rather, he is inconceivably gracious. One-hour-workers receive the same as those who bore the heat of the day. This parable carries both warning and promise for us—a warning that all comparisons based on merit or work do not belong in God's kingdom; a promise that our relationship with God is based solely on grace which he lavishes in abundance. The story only offends our sense of fairness when we compare ourselves to other workers. Even though they were promised twelve thrones, Jesus wouldn't allow his disciples to make comparisons. How much less would he let us whose labor is so late and light? When we keep our eyes where they belong—fixed on God—then have a correct view of our worth and labor. Then, when God places a denarius in our hands, we can marvel that the Lord isn't fair—thanks be to God! He doesn't give us what we deserve; no, he gives us what we don't.

*Note: For a striking illustration of this parable, consider "The Vineyard of the Lord," a painting by Lucas Cranach the Younger that hangs in Luther's parish church, St. Mary's in Wittenberg. For the history and explanations of imagery in the painting, see Albrecht Steinwachs' book, "The Vineyard of the Lord."*

**FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 55:6-9**

How gracious is God? His call to repentance doesn't extend only backsliding Christians. His call to return to him isn't restricted to upright citizens. His invitation to call on him is not reserved for sensible, suburban folk with 2.1 children and a white picket fence. The LORD calls the רָשָׁעִים, the ungodly and wicked men who worship lust and self. The LORD calls the אִישׁ אָזָן, the hardened sinner whose conscience has long stopped balking at his deeds. Look at what he promises to these people when they repent: mercy and pardon—the care of God and the forgiveness of God. They won't get what they deserve—that is mercy. They get what they don't deserve—that is the free pardon of grace. God's plan to save sinners by grace soars above all that we could conceive or imagine.

**SECOND LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 1:18B-27**

This is the first in a series of four lessons in the book of Philippians. If Pentecost season runs through Pentecost 21, the preacher may consider a four-week sermon series on this epistle of joy. Paul's confident words remind us that because of God's inconceivable grace, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Life lived under such grace is life filled with joy and ordered by God's wisdom (Prayer of the Day).

**SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: JONAH 4:5-11**

Jonah wanted Nineveh destroyed; in his mind it would only be fair. Nineveh was wicked, bloodthirsty, and feared. Jonah had not wanted to prophesy to them because he was afraid that they might listen and repent. Jonah knew what that would mean: God would have compassion on them and forgive them (Jonah 4:4). But God is far more gracious than Jonah could have even imagined. The LORD taught his prophet with a vine and made a striking point. Jonah, though you had no part in the creation, growth, or life of this vine, yet you were so emotionally attached to it. But think of me, Jonah! Those people, those children—even those cows!—I made them; I sustain them; I want them to be mine forever. So great is my grace!

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 9:6B-16**

Is God fair? Is God just? Neither—he is inconceivably gracious, as our eternal election proves. Paul answers the question by pointing us back to God's speech to Moses in Exodus 33. The Israelites had worshiped the golden calf, and Moses made intercession for them. Moses asked the LORD to show him his ways (v 13) and his glory (v14). God's responded by declaring his inconceivable grace: he would show mercy and grace to those he chose, regardless of any merit or worth. Though these people had abandoned him, he would be merciful and gracious to them. So also with us, the children of the faith of Abraham: God's eternal election of us to salvation had nothing to do with merit or worth or works, but only stems from his inconceivable grace and mercy. Preachers, take the opportunity to read the exceptional treatise on election found in the Formula of Concord's eleventh article on predestination (FC SD XI).

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

390 Salvation unto Us Has Come

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

212 Jerusalem, Thou City Fair and High  
305 From Depths of Woe I Cry to You  
318 Sent Forth by God's Blessing  
335 O Kingly Love, that Faithfully  
379 Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound  
381 Grace Has a Thrilling Sound  
384 By Grace I'm Saved  
389 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me  
390 Salvation unto Us Has Come  
401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ  
405 Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink  
419 If God Himself Be for Me  
420 God Moves in a Mysterious Way

438 In God, My Faithful God  
456 Forth in Your Name, O Lord, I Go  
466 Though Thoughtless Thousands Choose  
468 My God, My Father, Make Me Strong  
555 For All Your Saints, O Lord  
559 Lord of the Living Harvest  
606 For Me to Live Is Jesus  
611 For the Fruit of His Creation  
623 God the Father, Son, and Spirit  
732 We Are Singing, for the Lord is Our Light  
756 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight  
767 The Lord Is My Light

# NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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Our God wants real repentance that leads to true obedience. The Verse of the Day reminds us that one day, everyone will bow before Jesus of Nazareth and confess him as Lord. Some will do so in grief and others in joy. God wants real repentance from every sinner that they might bend the knee to Christ in true obedience and confess with gladness that Jesus is Lord. The Church prays that God would rule our hearts through Word and Sacrament that our repentance might be real and our obedience truly pleasing (Prayer of the Day).

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 21:28-32	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Philippians 2:1-11	2 Corinthians 13:5-8
<i>Psalm</i>	25	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 21:28-32

They seemed so righteous as they stood in the temple courts. The great men of Israel had gathered against Jesus. These men knew all the words to say and ways to act, but the only “righteousness” they had was a self-righteousness that offended God. They claimed to be doing God’s work and fulfilling his will, but there was no repentance and no true obedience. The parable Jesus spoke against them convicts every self-righteous person. The father commands two sons to work in his vineyard and receives two surprising answers. The first son flatly refuses; he fails to even offer an excuse, but simply says, “I will not. (οὐ θέλω)” The second son says all the right things and tacks on an appropriately respectful title. He seems almost breathless in his readiness to do the father’s will (ἐγώ, κύριε). True obedience, however, is not merely saying what God wants to hear, but doing what God wants done. The first son repented of his wickedness and gave his father true obedience; the second merely mouthed the words and contented himself with doing his own thing. Which did what the father wanted? Jesus’ question had only one answer, and the religious leaders gave it and indicted themselves. Yes, even the vilest sinner that repents gives an obedience far more true than the upright man wallowing in his self-righteousness. What a powerful preaching against the Pharisee inside each of us that wants to be content with saying the right words when it comes to faith! What a stinging rebuke of our lukewarm Christianity that confesses Christ with our mouth but denies him with our deeds! Repent, Christ says, and believe—true obedience will surely follow.

**FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 18:1-4, 25-32**

On this Sunday when the Church is called to continual repentance, Ezekiel brings a strong warning for Christians who grow lax in their faith or dismissive of their sin. God wants real repentance that leads to true obedience. Israel had not given either. Instead of seeing their suffering as a result of their sin and as a call to repentance, they saw only injustice. With their favorite proverb, “The fathers eat sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge,” they were saying that God should certainly punish sin, but they felt he was punishing the wrong people. They felt they were being punished for the sins of their parents, and they implied that God was not just in treating them this way. God denies it all: the soul that sins is the one that will die. This is not injustice—no, the injustice is that Man who was made for perfection sinned again and again against his God. God shows just how just he is: he will judge each man according to his way. Repent, God says, turn from your wickedness and live. God promises not to judge us by our past, but by our present, and so he calls us to live anew. Repent and receive a new heart and new spirit that leads to true obedience. Why will you die, O Israel? God wants exactly the opposite—repent and live!

**SECOND LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11**

This is the second in a series of four lessons in the book of Philippians. Paul quotes a Hymn of Humiliation and Exultation as a model to shape our attitudes. Real repentance leads us to the true obedience of imitating Christ. Jesus is the third son—the one never mentioned in the parable—the son who said “Yes,” and also worked in the vineyard. Jesus is the true son of his Father who both said the words, “Not my will, but yours,” and did the work, “obedient to death—even death on a cross.” When his work in the vineyard was complete, God exalted his Son to the highest place and now calls every man to real repentance and the true obedience of bending the knee and confessing with joy that Jesus Christ is Lord (Verse of the Day).

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5-8**

The Corinthian congregation had heard much from Paul on the topics of repentance and obedience. As they readied to receive Paul on his third visit, he encouraged them to prepare by testing themselves. Which son were they acting like, the son who worked in the vineyard or the one who just talked about it? Five times in this lesson, Paul uses a form of the word δοκιμάζω, telling them to examine themselves to see whether they were in the faith. True obedience gives evidence of real repentance. It is not the cause of repentance, but a visible fruit that shows our faith is genuine. That brings us the great joy of knowing that Christ Jesus is in us, and we are walking on the way of righteousness.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

306 Before You, God, the Judge of All

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

27 O Jesus, Lamb of God, You Are

205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven

217 The Head that Once Was Crowned

302 Lord, to You I Make Confession

304 Jesus Sinners Does Receive

308 As Surely As I Live, God Said

335 O Kingly Love, that Faithfully

337 Delay Not! Delay Not

344 At the Name of Jesus

350 All Praise Be Yours

368 O Savior, Precious Savior

370 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

385 Chief of Sinners Though I Be

403 I Know My Faith Is Founded

438 In God, My Faithful God

461 From Eternity, O God

494 Blest Be the Tie that Binds

536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head

708 Now Greet the Swiftly Changing Year

716 No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet

746 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd

749 The Love of Christ, Who Died for Me

773 In Unity and Peace

# TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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Our God patiently seeks fruits.

The Lord came to his city and his temple to teach his people, but the leaders of Israel rose up against him. During Holy Week, Sadducee and Pharisee put aside their differences to join in opposing this man who threatened their worldview and their worldly positions. When they questioned his authority, Jesus responded with three parables meant to drive the leaders to self-evaluation and self-condemnation. The parable of the two sons, the tenants in the vineyard and the wedding banquet were addressed to these men who had been given the trust of spiritual leadership in Israel, but had failed. The stories speak of family ties, contractual obligation, and the favor of a royal invitation. Each should have led to a proper response, yet each parable showed that Israel's leaders were refusing to give God the fruits of faith he patiently sought.

His enemies could answer Jesus' questions correctly (Matthew 21:31, 41). They knew the parables were talking about them (21:45). They could even prophesy about his work (John 11:47-53). They would not, however, repent of their wickedness. In their unbelief they ratified every sin of their forefathers.

The three parables portend the day when the father, the owner, the king finally says, "Enough." "Jerusalem is the home of the sons of God who will not render a son's obedience, of workers in God's vineyard who will not give God what is God's, of the guests of God who will not come to God's feast. The gulf between Jerusalem and the obedient Son of God who does the will of Him who sent Him is unbridgeable. Jerusalem is ripe for judgment" (Franzmann, Martin. *Follow Me*. 164).

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 21:33-43	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 5:1-7	2 Kings 21:1-15
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Philippians 3:12-21	2 Corinthians 6:1-13
<i>Psalm</i>	118	
<i>Color</i>	Green	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 21:33-43

Jesus' words in the Gospel highlight the patience of our God as he seeks fruits of faith. Could God have done anything more for Israel? The point here is the amazing patience the owner displays. What owner would



continue to send servants when they were treated this way? Note the ascensive nature of verse 35: μὲν ἔδειραν, ὃν δὲ ἀπέκτειναν, ὃν δὲ ἐλιθοβόλησαν (They beat. They murdered. They stoned.) Who would ever answer such barbarity by sending his only Son? The patience of God with Israel is without comparison. Even Jesus' enemies had to agree that the only just end for such tenants was judgment.

The owner's Son looked his enemies in the eye and proclaimed that opposing him was impossible. Killing the Son means defeat for his enemies and victory for God as prophesied in Psalm 118. God will lift his Son from death and use the stone rejected by men as his capstone.

Let Jesus' enemies be warned. You can oppose the Son actively and you will find yourself on your face. You can ignore the Son at your peril and you will find yourself ground to powder (λικμήσει αὐτόν).

Israel's leaders refused to produce the fruits of repentance and faith. As a result, the kingdom of God will be ripped away and given to a different nation. Jesus says, ἔθνει, not τὰ ἔθνη. The point is not that he will give the kingdom to Gentiles, but that God's kingdom doesn't belong to an ethnic group, but an ethical group: those who produce its fruit. The nation to whom it is given is the body of believers. Whether they are prostitutes (Matthew 21:32) or members of the Sanhedrin (John 19:39) or Gentiles who are of the faith of Abraham (Romans 4:16), the kingdom belongs to them by faith.

#### FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 5:1-7

The details of viticulture were common knowledge in Israel. They understood the backbreaking work that went into establishing a vineyard. They knew the joy of harvesting its fruit. Did Isaiah share this message at the time of the grape harvest when every detail was fresh?

The song of the vineyard starts out as a beautiful love ballad. Read aloud the Hebrew of verses 1-2b and notice the assonance of verse 1 and the vocalizations of verse 2. It's a story with a lovely and lyrical beginning. Israel is God's own vineyard, and he gave her everything she needed.

After planting vines, a farmer normally had to wait two years for the first harvest. Isaiah tells us that God was not idle after planting. He built a tower, a press—this vineyard had everything needed. No expense was spared. What a surprise then, when God came to look for fruit and found only רִשְׁעִים “stinking things.” When God speaks in verse 3, who could disagree with him?

Like the vineyard, Israel lacked nothing. God took her from Egypt and planted her in the Promised Land. He drove out her enemies and made her secure. She had the Law, the Temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, the prophets. What more could God have done? Yet when he came to harvest, there was no fruit. In fact, God found the opposite of his intention! Note the paronomasia of verse 7: God looked for צְדָקָה “justice” but found דָּמָא “bloodshed.” He looked for יִשְׁרָאֵל “righteousness” but found קוֹלֵי דַּאֲרָה “cries of distress.” It had a beautiful beginning, but the song of the vineyard has a harrowing end: God himself will tear it down.

When God looks for fruits of faith in our life and finds them lacking, couldn't he ask the same question of us, “What more could I have done for you? I planted you in baptism; I bought you with blood; I guarded you with angels.” This song leads God's people of every generation to self-evaluation and self-condemnation.

Such a song leads us to repent and cry, “Lord, have mercy!” Let us never receive God’s grace in vain, but pray that we might produce the fruits that our beloved seeks.

### **SECOND LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 3:12-21**

This is the third of four consecutive readings from Philippians. Today’s pericope fits nicely with the theme of the Gospel: Paul encourages us to live up to what we have already attained. God has given us the kingdom of heaven by faith. We are the people he promised would produce its fruits. So let us do exactly that. Let us live drastically different lives than the people of this world who worship their stomach and their shame. Let us with free hearts do everything that pleases our Lord and Savior.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: 2 KINGS 21:1-15**

Manasseh’s story shocks us. Though he was king of God’s people, he committed every evil imaginable. His wickedness knew no bounds. He worshiped idols and put false altars in the temple of God’s holy name—even an Asherah pole. He practiced witchcraft. He put his son to death as a sacrifice. He filled Jerusalem with blood, and tradition says he had the prophet Isaiah sawn in half. He led God’s people into such apostasy that their sin was worse than the nations that God had driven out of the land at the exodus. God had been patient with Israel for 750 years, but the fruitlessness of Manasseh proved too much, even for our patient God. God vowed to destroy his vineyard, Israel.

More shocking than Manasseh’s sin, however, is the story of God’s grace. In 2 Chronicles 33, we learn that Manasseh finally heard God’s call to repentance once the shackles were clamped on and a hook put through his nose. He humbled himself and cried out to God—and God forgave him. Consider the list of sins above again—and God forgave him! “The LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.”

That God could forgive Manasseh boggles the mind. So, too, does the change in Manasseh’s life. He produced the fruits that his God had patiently sought: he removed the altars, got rid of the false gods, worshiped the true God and encouraged all of Judah to do the same. Recognizing the greatness of God’s mercy and love leads us to diligently produce the fruits he desires.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-13**

Jesus kept his promise and gave the kingdom of God to a new nation, to a people founded by faith and motivated by love. Paul writes as a servant of God to us, the new workers in the vineyard. He warns us not to squander the opportunity before us by receiving the grace of God in vain. Now is the day of salvation. The grace of God leads us to live as tenants who produce the fruits our God seeks. Paul points to his own ministry as an example. The grace of God led Paul to make every effort to bear the cross and suffer for the sake of the kingdom. He pointed to his fruits of faith and encouraged the Church, “Open wide your hearts also.”

Make us ready, with free hearts, to do whatever pleases you; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

203 Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

110 My Song Is Love Unknown  
127 Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted  
209 Day of Wrath, Oh, Day of Mourning  
211 I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name  
225 This Is the Day the Lord Has Made  
254 The Day Full of Grace  
281 God Has Spoken by His Prophets  
319 On My Heart Imprint Your Image  
320 On My Heart Imprint Your Image  
342 Amid the World's Bleak Wilderness  
346 In You Is Gladness  
366 O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild  
382 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less  
386 Now I Have Found the Firm Foundation

417 I'm But a Stranger Here  
431 I Walk in Danger All the Way  
457 Fight the Good Fight  
466 Though Thoughtless Thousands Choose  
480 Almighty Father, Heaven and Earth  
528 Christ Is Our Cornerstone  
531 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation  
536 Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's Head  
550 Behold a Host, Arrayed in White  
565 There Still Is Room  
765 Day by Day  
771 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light  
774 Church of God, Elect and Glorious  
786 The Song of Moses

# END TIME

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## The Season

The last four Sundays of the Church Year are designated as the season of End Time, a season unique to *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. The focus of the season is fulfillment of Christ's promises and encouragement for the Church of the End Times. We live in the last age of this earth, and in this season, Jesus wants us to remember his promise, "Behold, I am coming soon!" This season prepares the Church for these latter days by encouraging faithfulness to the Word, mindfulness of the judgment, watchfulness for Christ's coming, and joyfulness in Christ's reign.

## The Sundays

The Prayer of the Day for each Sunday in End Times sets the theme for the day. On each Sunday, the Church prays that God would bestow on her a characteristic necessary for the End Times Church:

- Reformation: Lord, keep us faithful to the Word!
- Last Judgment: Lord, keep us mindful of the Judgment!
- Saints Triumphant: Lord, keep us watchful for our triumph!
- Christ the King: Lord, keep us joyful in our King!

# FIRST SUNDAY OF END TIME—REFORMATION SUNDAY

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Lord, keep us faithful to your Word! The Festival of the Lutheran Reformation of the Church emphasizes the true Church's unfailing reliance on the Word of God and unflinching testimony to it in the face of persecution. Jesus promised to pour out his Spirit on the Church that we might be God's mouthpiece even before kings. Today the Church prays that the Lord give us the strength to be faithful and the peace of knowing our lives are safe in his hands.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 10:16-23	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	Galatians 5:1-6	2 Timothy 4:9-18
<i>Psalm</i>	46	
<i>Color</i>	Red	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 10:16-23

Throughout the history of the Church, the story of faithfulness to the Word of God has always been the story of persecution. And rightly so, because Jesus promised it! Who would send defenseless sheep into a world of ravenous wolves? It makes no sense, yet that is precisely the plan that Jesus describes for his Church. It makes no sense—unless you are the Good Shepherd who wants his sheep to utterly depend on him. Our trust in Jesus doesn't guarantee an absence of persecution, but faithfulness in spite of it. We will witness to the Word of God before brothers, fathers, children, governors and princes. Jesus promised, "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." What comfort that must have been for Martin Luther, whose faithful witness caused him to be expelled from his order, excommunicated from his church, and outlawed from his empire. Before the kings and princes of Europe, Luther gave faithful witness at Worms: "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

**FIRST LESSON: DANIEL 6:10-12, 16-23**

They didn't persecute Daniel because of theses nailed to a church door; they didn't accuse him because of stirring words spoken over a pile of condemned books. They persecuted Daniel because he prayed in his home. Daniel made a bold confession and faithful witness with his knees. No godless king or immutable law would change the homage due to God. No threats, no pain, not even death would change Daniel's loyalty to the Word of God that called on him to worship the LORD his God only. So Daniel went home and prayed, just as he had done before. He was faithful, even in the face of certain persecution. For the Christian, most persecution doesn't come from public writings like Luther, but from private acts like Daniel. We live our faith and are persecuted because of it. We don't face a den of lions, but persecution abounds when we're faithful to the Word. We lose relationships because of moral purity; we lose promotions because of worship priorities; we lose friendships because we won't join in sinful talking or walking. Faithfulness to God's Word in the face of persecution requires trust. God shut the lions' mouths to answer the king's question: Is your God able to rescue you? Yes, he is. God shut the lions' mouths to show his Church of all the ages that God is able to guard and keep his own. You can trust him and be faithful to his Word in the face of any persecution.

**SECOND LESSON: GALATIANS 5:1-6**

Martin Luther called the book of Galatians, "My Katie von Bora—I am wedded to it." Paul's letter speaks clearly against work righteousness and plainly about grace. That meant much to Luther who had staked his life on both topics. Why would anyone risk so much over words? Because the very freedom of the Gospel was at stake. Either we are free by grace or slaves under the law; there is no middle ground. Attempts to justify ourselves by outward acts do not result in justification at all—whether you are first-century Judaizers, sixteen-century clerics or twenty-first century moralists. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. So, Paul says, stand firm and be faithful to the Word of God that sets us free.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: 2 TIMOTHY 4:9-18**

Paul learned firsthand that faithfulness to the Word of God brought persecution. His former brothers had abandoned him; his enemies had not stopped hounding him. Though he was by himself, Paul was never alone. Jesus stayed by his side and in Paul fulfilled the promises of both the First Lesson and the Gospel. Consider Paul's confidence that God will rescue him from every evil attack—the point is not a rescue from danger, but rather a rescue through danger to the heavenly kingdom. Paul knew that even if he died for Christ, God would rescue him from that evil attack and bring him to heaven. Eventually the headsman's sword took Paul's life; but it did not stop Jesus from rescuing him and taking him to his heavenly kingdom. Lord, keep us faithful to your word in the face of any persecution! To you be glory forever and ever. Amen.

*Note: The effect of the Lutheran Reformation of the Church on the history of the world can hardly be overstated. In fact, when US News and World Report ranked the most important events of the last 1000 years, the Lutheran Reformation placed second, right behind Gutenberg's moveable type printing press. Historians consider the Lutheran Reformation to be of greater significance than the discovery of the New World (number 3). Luther was a monk, a priest, a professor at a little university in Wittenberg, Germany, but he is considered the third most influential person of the last 1000 years (1000 Years and 1000 People, Gottlieb and Bowers). God used his witness and simple faithfulness to the Word to change the world. As heirs of the Reformation, may our witness be as faithful and the effects of our witness be as profound!*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

200 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

201 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

179 Hail Thee, Festival Day

187 When God the Spirit Came

199 In Trembling Hands, Lord God, We Hold

202 If God Had Not Been on Our Side

203 Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

204 O God, Our Lord, Your Holy Word

205 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven

236 All Praise to God Who Reigns Above

239 Glory Be to God the Father

290 One Thing's Needful

291 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word

349 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

399 To God Be the Glory

400 O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth

408 Christians, While on Earth Abiding

415 Be Still, My Soul

514 Lord, Help Us Ever to Retain

541 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide

546 Lord Jesus, You Have Come

548 O Lord, in Prayer You Spent the Night

549 Around the Throne, A Glorious Band

550 Behold a Host, Arrayed in White

553 Give Thanks to God on High

567 Awake, O Spirit, Who Inspired

621 For Years on Years of Matchless Grace

711 Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure Eternal

770 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve

# SECOND SUNDAY OF END TIME—LAST JUDGMENT

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Lord, keep us mindful of the Judgment! *He will come to judge the living and the dead.* We confess it every Sunday, but often live like those are empty words. Moses’ psalm on the mortality of man shakes us from our spiritual slumber. Number your days aright and gain a heart of wisdom! Today the Church prays that God keep us ever mindful of the Last Judgment that we might be found in faith, fruitful in both word and deed. Then there’s no need to fear Judgment Day; rather, we can look forward to the day of our redemption.

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 25:31-46	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Daniel 7:9,10	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	Romans 2:2-11
<i>Psalm</i>	90	
<i>Color</i>	Red	

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

### VERSE OF THE DAY

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

### THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 25:31-46

The Son of Man came once as a humble baby, but will return as a glorious king with angel armies at his side. He will sit on his throne, and all the nations will be brought before him to be judged. In this judgment, there are no shades of gray: you are either a sheep or a goat—there is no third option. You will either be judged righteous and brought to heaven or condemned and sent into eternal fire. In our present world we see so many shades of gray, but at the judgment the contrast between believer and unbeliever will be stark. Jesus’ judgment on unbelievers will be a just one, yet completely opposite of what he had wanted. Hell was never meant for humans; it had been prepared for the devil and his angels. When children of Adam are sent to hell on Judgment Day, they will enter a realm never meant for them. From the creation of the world, God had prepared an inheritance for the sons of Adam, a kingdom that becomes ours not by merit, but by grace. Both sheep and goats fail to see how their earthly lives could possibly merit their eternal fate. In fact, they speak the same words. The contrast, however, is stark: the sheep had faith in Christ that gave evidence of itself in the world; the goats had neither faith nor true fruits. Both receive an eternal judgment—life for the sheep and punishment for the goats. Lord, keep us mindful of your coming judgment that we might be found in faith, judged by your grace, and gifted with eternal life!



**FIRST LESSON: DANIEL 7:9, 10**

Daniel sees a vision of the Last Judgment that is filled with fire and thrones and books. God the Father is seated on his throne with fire beneath him and flowing out from him—fire that metes out punishment for the unrighteous but refines believers like gold with the dross removed. Who doesn't shudder when he sees Daniel's vision of God and then hears the somber statement, "The books were opened"? Being mindful of the coming judgment means knowing that one day the books will be opened, and God will judge us according to what is in them. But look carefully: there is not just one throne here! Daniel said "thrones" were set in place. See who else is at the judgment. The Son of God has a throne there (Psalm 110). So do the apostles (Mt 19:28). Yes, the same Jesus who died for us will be there to advocate for us; the same apostles who preached Jesus Christ risen for the forgiveness of sins will be there to call us part of their Church. Look at Revelation 20:11-15 and see the rest of the story. There are two kinds of books: books of deeds that record what each person has done, and a book that holds only names. Unbelievers are judged on the basis of their deeds, but believers are judged on the simple fact that their names are written in the book of life. When we are mindful of that, we can rejoice and look forward to the end of this age when we will reign with Christ in glory.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11**

Being mindful of the judgment means living according to God's Word, not according to what the world says. The world tells itself again and again not to worry about God and his judgment. Peace and safety are its watchwords. Regardless of what the world says, the judgment is most certainly coming. When it comes on the world, it will be like a woman in labor—sudden, unstoppable, irreversible. Paul reminds us to be mindful of the coming judgment by living alert and self-controlled lives. We are believers and are as different from unbelievers as sheep are from goats, as day is from night. So let's live like it! We have been appointed to receive salvation, so let's live as sons of the light and sons of the day. Leave the deeds of darkness for this dark world whose cries of "Peace!" and "Safety!" will not stop the judgment from overtaking them.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 2:2-11**

Being mindful of the judgment means never falling into a self-righteous condemnation of the world around us. You judge them, but you do the same things that they do—do you really think that you will escape God's wrath? Those are serious words. Paul aims leave no soul undicted, but to make the whole world accountable to God (Romans 3:19). As long as man still has the righteousness and pride and strength to judge his fellowman, he is not ready for the beggary of faith; he is not ready to receive the radical rescue of the righteousness of God (Franzmann). God will give according to what each person has done—but the point here is the motive, not the actions themselves. Those who live in faith seek God's kingdom and his righteousness—their actions give evidence of the faith that moves them, and they receive eternal life. Those who live without faith seek only themselves—their actions give evidence that faith is lacking, and they receive wrath and anger. Lord, keep us mindful of the judgment that we might be found in fruitful faith!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

209 Day of Wrath, Oh, Day of Mourning

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

25 The King Shall Come  
29 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending  
74 Now Let Us Come before Him  
207 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near  
208 Great God, What Do I See and Hear  
213 Forever with the Lord  
214 Jerusalem the Golden  
240 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise  
243 Oh, Worship the King  
254 The Day Full of Grace  
286 The Law Commands and Makes Us Know  
306 Before You, God, the Judge of All  
337 Delay Not! Delay Not  
376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness  
390 Salvation unto Us Has Come  
398 Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults  
401 Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ

419 If God Himself Be for Me  
441 O God, Our Help in Ages Past  
453 Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spoke  
475 The Man Is Ever Blest  
481 O God, Your Hand the Heavens Made  
482 Forgive Us, Lord  
486 Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us  
524 O Fount of Good, for All Your Love  
525 The Son of God, Our Christ  
535 Our Fathers' God in Years Long Gone  
704 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending  
728 Jerusalem the Golden  
729 There Is a Blessed Home  
731 The King Will Come at Age's End  
771 I Want to Walk As a Child of the Light  
776 Sing with All the Saints in Glory  
779 I Sing as I Arise Today

# THIRD SUNDAY OF END TIME—SAINTS TRIUMPHANT

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Lord, keep us watchful for our triumph! Today the Church hears strains of the distant triumph song and affirms, “Blessed are they who are called to the marriage feast of the Lamb.” Jesus wants us to be the waiting Church—the Church that watches for her Savior and cries, “Come, Lord Jesus!” As we journey through these latter days, however, our vigilance slips, and our hearts grow drowsy because the bridegroom seems to be taking so long. So while we wait, the Church prays, “Keep us ever watchful for the coming of your Son that we may sit with him and all your holy ones at the marriage feast in heaven.” (Prayer of the Day)

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 25:1-13	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Isaiah 52:1-6	Ezekiel 37:15-28
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Revelation 19:1-19
<i>Psalm</i>	84	
<i>Color</i>	White	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 25:1-13

Jesus pictures the time before his return as virgins waiting for a bridegroom and the start of a wedding feast. The parable divides all people (*ten virgins*) into two groups: foolish and wise. They weren’t described that way because of what they did in the parable, but their actions showed what they were. The foolish virgins acted utterly foolish, bearing empty lamps. The other virgins’ actions showed that they indeed were wise. The wise went into the joys of wedding banquet, but the foolish lost both invitation and even recognition. Jesus’ central instruction in this parable calls for the waiting Church to be the watchful Church. Keep watch for you do not know the day or the hour!

## FIRST LESSON: ISAIAH 52:1-6

Isaiah prophesies to captive Israel who is sleepwalking through life, because they are lost in the stupor of grief over their afflictions. “Awake!” the prophet cries, and hear God’s promise of coming triumph that will give you strength to face your present problems. God would reveal his glory by redeeming his people and

leading them safely home. Captive Israel here is a picture of the waiting Church, and one day God will fulfill this promise also in us. The Church of the End Times labors in a world held captive by sin, and is tempted to sleepwalk through these last days. So the prophet cries to us, “Awake!” for the day of triumph is coming when God will lay bare his arm and redeem us from sin, death, and the devil forever. He will lead us to the New Jerusalem where we will sit enthroned at the marriage feast of the Lamb. The day is coming—watch for it!

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

To the new Christians in Thessalonica, Paul explains the certain hope we have to be saints triumphant. His words are so simple, yet so profound! We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that all who die in Christ will go with him to heavenly triumph. And we will be with the Lord forever. This is the crown jewel of the Christian faith: blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Paul’s main point: encouragement. Encourage each other with the hope of saints triumphant so that there is neither ignorance nor hopeless grief, but rather faithful, expectant watching for the triumph we know is coming.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 37:15-28**

This lesson immediately follows Ezekiel’s prophecy about the dry bones. God had promised Israel that he would raise them up from their graves and settle them in the land. He promised to restore captive Israel to the land of Abraham. The rescue and return of the remnant provides a picture of what the Church waits and watches for. In this lesson God extends that prophecy beyond physical Israel to the Church and to the Messianic kingdom of his Son. Earthly troubles like the captivity or our struggle with sin are temporary. The triumph that’s coming won’t be. Notice that in the last four verse God uses **עולם** five times to talk about the unending nature of the kingdom waiting for us. It will be a kingdom without divisions caused by sin, but exemplified by oneness (one stick, one nation, one king, one shepherd—forever). How will this be? Look at how many times God says that he will act for us! We are purely passive in acquiring the triumph in store for us. God will act to save and to cleanse and to renew his covenant: I will be their God, and they will be my people. As Ezekiel held his bound sticks before the eyes of his countrymen, so the Church holds God’s promises of pending triumph before us and continually cries, “Wait for it! Watch for it!”

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: REVELATION 19:1-9**

What kind of triumph are we watching and waiting for? For the persecuted Church, Jesus gave the Apocalypse of St. John, to let his people know: Jesus will win. Revelation 18 foretold the Fall of Babylon and the destruction of every enemy of the Church. “After this...” John heard the reaction of the saints and angels and all creation—they cried, “Hallelujah!” The word used so prevalently in the Old Testament was not heard in the New Testament until its final vision of the saints triumphant. George Handel tried to capture the glory of what John witnessed with his *Hallelujah Chorus*, but his work will certainly pale by comparison to that distant triumph song. John lets us see behind the shut door of the parable in our Gospel for the Sunday—he lets us see what we watch for: the consummation of the marriage of Christ and the Church. Blessed are they who are called to the marriage feast of the Lamb! Keep us watchful for our coming triumph!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

206 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

7 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers  
10 The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us  
29 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending  
79 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star  
169 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus  
208 Great God, What Do I See and Hear  
211 I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name  
212 Jerusalem, Thou City Fair and High  
213 Forever with the Lord  
214 Jerusalem the Golden  
215 Jerusalem, My Happy Home  
219 Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See  
220 O'er the Distant Mountains Breaking  
231 Now the Silence  
234 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty  
244 Arise, My Soul, Arise  
284 How Precious Is the Book Divine  
325 How Blest Are They Who Hear  
341 Crown Him with Many Crowns  
370 All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name  
376 Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness

405 Oh, for a Faith that Will Not Shrink  
533 I Love Your Kingdom, Lord  
549 Around the Throne, A Glorious Band  
550 Behold a Host, Arrayed in White  
551 For All the Saints  
565 There Still Is Room  
596 Let Me Be Yours Forever  
605 Asleep in Jesus! Blessed Sleep  
607 How Blest Are They  
704 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending  
727 There Is a Higher Throne  
728 Jerusalem the Golden  
729 There Is a Blessed Home  
730 Blessed Are They  
731 The King Will Come at Age's End  
743 O Gracious Lord, I Firmly Am Believing  
745 May the Peace of God  
760 When Peace, like a River  
776 Sing with All the Saints in Glory  
788 Thanks Be to God!

# LAST SUNDAY OF END TIME—CHRIST THE KING

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Lord, keep us joyful in Christ our King! On this last Sunday of the Church Year, we rejoice in the fulfillment of God’s plan for our salvation through Christ our King. And we rejoice because Christ our King reigns—the king who once came as a sacrifice; the king who still shepherds us day by day; the king who one day will conquer all our enemies. Rejoice in his reign and look forward to the day when every knee will bow with us before the King of kings and Lord of Lords!

	CHRISTIAN WORSHIP LECTIONARY	SUPPLEMENTAL LECTIONARY
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 27:27-31	
<i>First Lesson</i>	Ezekiel 34:11-16, 23, 24	
<i>Second Lesson</i>	1 Corinthians 15:20-28	
<i>Psalm</i>	47	
<i>Color</i>	White	

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

## VERSE OF THE DAY

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

## THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 27:27-31

Joyful? How can this make us rejoice? The scene would seem like bad satire if not for its sad reality. Petty little men in a tiny little fortress bully the One who created light from darkness and divided land from sea. He deserved the finest crown, but look what Man gave! He deserved the noblest scepter, but look what Man handed him! He deserved the sincerest devotion, but look what man offered! He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. The King of heaven came to earth, and look at what Man gave him! He could have swept them all away; he could have condemned us like he had the fallen angels. Man deserved nothing more—but look at what *He* gave! He gave his holiness for our sin and his death for our life. This scene is joyful because we know how it ends. The picture of our King wearing a crown of thorns is not tragic, but rather it is full of grace. We have a King in Christ who left his heavenly throne and *regnavit a ligno crucis* (“reigned from the wood of the cross”, Justin Martyr; Augustine). Rejoice in Christ the King who came as our sacrifice!

**FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 34:11-16, 23, 24**

Since the time of David, Israel had called her kings “shepherds.” The men who followed in David’s line, however, did not shepherd Israel in the paths of God. So God made a promise: the Sovereign LORD would shepherd his people. Notice the first person pronouns in this lesson—we rejoice because we have a King who acts on behalf of his people, like a shepherd for sheep. God says, “I will guide them; I will guard them; I will seek them; I will find them.” Most importantly, God promised to raise up King David’s greater Son to be the prince of his people and their Good Shepherd. Rejoice in the Christ the King who shepherds his flock day by day!

**SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28**

If the story of Christ ended on Good Friday, there could be no joy at all. Had Christ not been raised, we should be pitied more than all men, as Paul says in the verse immediately preceding this lesson. But the story didn’t end on Friday—a whole new chapter started on Easter Sunday morning! Christ has indeed been raised, and that means he is the firstfruits of the dead. When the Israelites brought the firstfruit offering to the Lord, they confessed that the whole harvest belonged to God, and they rejoiced at the greater harvest that was coming. Through the resurrection of Jesus, God promised that a field full of souls will follow the Firstfruits from death to life. Until then, Christ will reign as king until the Great Day comes when he reverses everything Adam ruined and destroys every enemy that stands against the Church. Then our joy will be complete, and God will be all in all. Rejoice in Christ the King who will conquer all our enemies!

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

217 The Head that Once Was Crowned

**ADDITIONAL HYMNS**

25 The King Shall Come	277 God, We Praise You
29 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending	278 Holy God, We Praise Your Name
31 O Lord of Light, Who Made the Stars	341 Crown Him with Many Crowns
85 O God from God, O Light from Light	344 At the Name of Jesus
153 Alleluia! Jesus Lives	350 All Praise Be Yours
160 This Joyful Eastertide	351 Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus
164 Today in Triumph Christ Arose	361 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence
167 Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense	370 All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name
206 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying	373 O Jesus, King Most Wonderful
214 Jerusalem the Golden	426 Yours Forever, God of Love
216 Saints, Behold! The Sight Is Glorious	540 Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng
218 Then the Glory	704 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending
219 Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See	716 No Tramp of Soldiers’ Marching Feet
227 Come, Let Us Join Our Cheerful Songs	721 If Christ Had Not Been Raised from Death
239 Glory Be to God the Father	728 Jerusalem the Golden
265 This Is the Feast of Victory	731 The King Will Come at Age’s End
267 Isaiah, Mighty Seer in Days of Old	749 The Love of Christ, Who Died for Me

754 The Tree of Life

787 A Canticle to the Lamb



*Soli Deo Gloria!*