

THEME OF THE WEEK: God Manifested in the Youth of Jesus

Jesus redeemed the whole extent of our human lives from conception to death. Nothing pertaining to our humanity is left untouched by Jesus' life-giving flesh. God be praised! Before our flesh knew only sin's power and the devil's captivity. By being perfectly obedient to His heavenly Father, by being submissive to Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, by keeping the Law our flesh could not keep, Jesus offered up His obedience to God as our own. On the cross, He offered up His sufferings under the Law's punishments as our own. For Jesus' sake, God loves us as His dear children whether we are newly born or nearing our last moments of this life.

SUN

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:41-52 "Obedience and Submissiveness"

With this story the Spirit opens your heart to trust in Jesus' perfect obedience to God and earthly authority. The world thinks it's an either/or proposition. Either you choose to love God, or you choose to love people. Not so. When Mary and Joseph lost Jesus, He sought out His heavenly Father's sanctuary. This beautifully kept the first three commandments. When they finally found Him, He wasn't angry, but submitted Himself to their God-given authority from the 4th commandment. Jesus' obedience and submissiveness has become yours through baptism and faith. More than that, the story teaches us to trust God the Father while we're patient with the powers over us in this world. *Grant me to trust in Jesus' righteousness as my salvation, O Lord. Amen.*

MON

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 13 "How Long?"

It's not weakness to heap your sorrows upon the Lord. Nor is it sin. Do you show one face to the world while carefully concealing your pain? Showing vulnerability gives satisfaction to our enemies. So we set our faces like flint to hide our hurt. Meanwhile our hearts wither under the weight of the insults, betrayals, and shame. It feels like God's turned His back on us. It feels like we've been forgotten. Learn to pray for the Lord's help from David who laid bare his anguish. Bearing weakness to the God who became weak for your salvation in the person of His Son is faith. Remember the cross. Remember Jesus' sufferings and see the Lord's steadfast love. He will not abandon you. *I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me. Amen.*

TUE

SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:1-5 "Spiritual Worship"

People who claim to be spiritual but not religious make me nervous. Do they sense things I can't see? Do they feel God's mysterious will directing them from one thing to another? What am I missing? Through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit calms my fears. Spiritual worship is presenting your body to God as a living sacrifice of thanksgiving which springs from faith. It's learning to love from the Lord who gave His life as sacrifice to save you. It's discovering in the law a pattern of love to shape all our good works. Being transformed in the renewal of your mind is meditating on Jesus' death and resurrection which gives us peace. *Grant me through sacred meditations on Your Law and Gospel to discern what is Your will, O God. Amen.*

WED

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 61:1-3 "Inspired to Bring Good News"

According to custom, Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath day to worship by hearing His Father's Word and believing it. Today, the scroll was given to Jesus to read. Having read from Isaiah, all the eyes of the synagogue were fixed on Him. "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Before, Jesus listened intently to God's Word like the rest of the men. But today, after being anointed to begin His public ministry by the Holy Spirit at His baptism, Jesus revealed himself as the Prophet greater than Moses who is the preacher of a new covenant of grace, a minister of Good News. God be praised. The year of the Lord's favor has come. *Grant us not to reject Your Son, O Lord, but to embrace His words with faith Amen.*

THU

SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:13-16 "Let the Children Come to Me"

I've never understood the desire to keep children from 'adult' worship. Babies must be seen as some sort of distraction for people who think that worship is some sort of rigorous mental focus on Jesus, or of feeling uninterrupted spiritual vibes beamed down from God. Put weird assumptions about worship aside and marvel at how the Savior rejoices to lay His hands on the children in blessing. His touch is the same saving touch that you've received in Baptism. Baptism isn't your moral commitment to do better. Nor is it a work that pleases God. It is God's lavish washing away of sin for all people, from the infants to the aged. *Grant me to receive the kingdom of God like an infant, with the simplicity of childlike trust in Your love. Amen.*

FRI

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:1-4 "Commandments and Promises"

The law compels obedience with threats of punishments. The gospel, on the other hand, promises grace and blessing from God for Christ's sake alone. This is true but remember that the law also promises blessing. The fourth commandment is "the first commandment with a promise." If children are careful to obey their parents, their lives in this world are greatly improved. Experience bears this out. The difference between this law promise and the gospel promise is that the law is always conditional on our obedience. The gospel is always unconditional and freely given. God grant that our hearts embrace the unconditional promises of grace so that we'll joyfully strive to achieve the worldly blessings promised by the law. *Help me to love, O Lord. Amen.*

SAT

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 86 "Gladden the Soul"

When we seek the Lord in prayer, especially in our most desperate moments, the Lord will prove Himself to us as our gracious deliverer. David assures us that the Lord is good and forgiving. When we fall upon our knees and cast ourselves upon His mercy, no sin that we've committed, no shame, and no guilt will stand between us and our God. The Lord's favor has been purchased and won for you by Jesus' precious blood shed upon the cross. His sufferings are so effective in having won God's favor that the law, devil, world, and our flesh cannot keep our Father from answering us in the day of trouble. Nothing gives God greater joy than to prove this love and mercy to us often as we look to Him to help us. *You, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me. Amen.*

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