

A Short Form of Daily Devotion

1 BLESS YOURSELF WITH THE HOLY CROSS AND SAY:
In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

2 SAY THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father
Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our
Lord, who was conceived by the Holy
Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered
under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died
and was buried. He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the
dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at
the right hand of God, the Father
Almighty. From thence He will come to
judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy
Christian church, the communion of
saints, the forgiveness of sins, the
resurrection of the body, and the life
everlasting. Amen.

4 PRAY THE MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER

Morning. I thank You, my
heavenly Father, through Jesus
Christ, Your dear Son, that You
have kept me this night from all
harm and danger; and I pray that
You would keep me this day also
from sin and every evil, that all my
doings and life may please You.
For into Your hands I commend
myself, my body and soul, and all
things. Let Your holy angel be with
me, that the evil foe may have no
power over me. Amen.

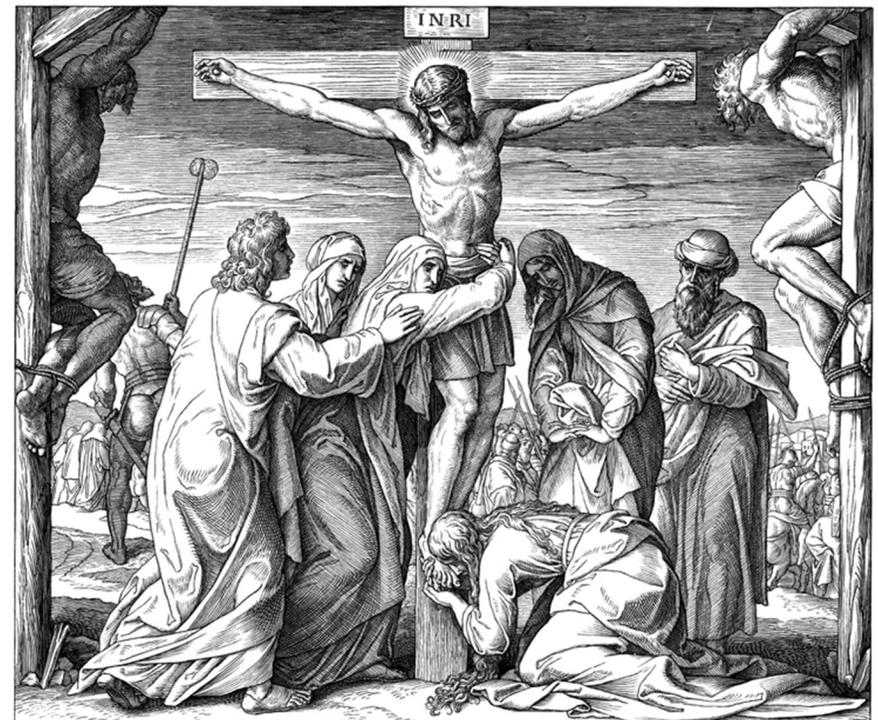
3 PRAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it
is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who
trespass against us;
and lead us not into
temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and
the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Evening. I thank you, my
heavenly Father, through Jesus
Christ, Your dear Son, that You
have graciously kept me this day;
and I pray that You would forgive
me all my sins where I have done
wrong, and graciously keep me this
night. For into Your hands, I
commend myself, my body and
soul, and all things. Let Your holy
angel be with me, that the evil foe
may have no power over me. Amen.

Around the Word Lenten Devotions

Lent 2015



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Authors

Thank you to the following pastors who generously volunteered their time to produce these devotions.

Devotions for February 15-21 are written by Pastor Sean Deanzer. He is the pastor of two Lutheran congregations in Great Bend and Barney, North Dakota, husband of Audrey, and father of Lucia and a new baby arriving in May 2015.

Devotions for February 22-29 are written by Pastor John Preus. He is the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Guttenberg, IA and St. Paul Lutheran Church in McGregor, IA.

Devotions for March 1-7 are written by Pastor Mike Grieve. He is the pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Golden, Ill., where he has served for 7 years. He and his beautiful wife Krista have a one-year-old daughter named Lydia.

Devotions for March 8-14 are written by Pastor Ryan Fehrmann. He serves Grace Lutheran Church of Paris, Illinois. He enjoys pipes, pints, and theology – preferably all three together.

Devotions for March 15-21 are written by Pastor Travis Berg. He who serves at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Latimer, Iowa.

Devotions for March 22-28 are written by Pastor Travis Kleinschmidt. He is the pastor of St. Jakobi Lutheran Church in Shawano, WI (stjakobi.org). He is married to Noël and has three boys, Joseph, Nolan, and Adam.

Devotions for March 29-April 4 are written by Pastor Travis Loeslie. He is the pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Lester Prairie, MN. He and his wife Stephanie have three children.

Devotions for April 5-11 are written by Pastor Roy Askins. He serves Trinity Lutheran Church in Livingston, Texas (trinitylivingston.org).

Introduction to the Around the Word Devotion

Jesus gives everything for us. At Christmas we rejoice that Jesus is into our flesh and blood, that He is our brother. In Lent we rejoice that Jesus is into our suffering, into our sin and death for us and our salvation. Here, on the cross, the saving work of our Jesus comes to a great and glorious crescendo. The Lord of life is dead, and we are made alive. The Christ is cursed, and we are forgiven. Jesus is given over to suffering, and we are given the great joy and certain hope of life that never ends. This is the joy of Lent.

The Lord's Church has always observed the season of Lent as a special time of meditation on the Scriptures and repentant prayer. In this spirit of devotion Around the Word has prepared this devotional booklet.

How to Use this Devotional Booklet

The basic form for prayer follows the order suggested by Martin Luther in the Small Catechism. You will find on the back cover of this booklet the standard order of morning and evening prayer.

Inside the booklet you will find four pages for each week of Lent (and the first week of Easter). We have assigned a simple theme for each week. Each week has an assigned Psalm, Verse, Prayer, and Hymn Stanza for use in your devotion. Please use as much or as little as is helpful.

Turning the page you will find a daily Bible Passage and short devotional paragraph and prayer written by a Lutheran pastor. You will find passages spread throughout the Scripture to help see these themes in the Old and New Testaments.

The devotions are designed to be completed in less than ten minutes. Some people will want to expand the devotions by reading the context of the suggested verses, adding to the prayers and petitions, and using their hymnal to sing all the stanzas of the suggested hymn.

These devotions are provided for the church and are free to use, whole or in part, in any way that is helpful for the Gospel. To download more copies, or to sign up for free weekly devotion pages published by Around the Word, please visit www.whatdoesthismean.org/devotions. Please contact us with any questions, Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller, General Editor of Theological Awesomeness, bryan@aroundthewordjournal.com.

Weekly Devotion for February 15-21, 2015

REPENTANCE



“Dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” With these words, Lent begins. “The wages of sin is death.” But Lent is about Jesus’ death, not yours. “Weep not for me; weep for yourselves.” You see your sins and their punishment when you behold Him on His cross; repent! But it was necessary for Him to suffer and die and rise so that you may be forgiven, made alive, and saved; believe! You behold your salvation when you behold Christ crucified. He died willingly in your place to breathe eternal life into your dusty body. He is the content of your faith. Our repentance and faith are set toward His life-giving cross, the joy of all the world.

and did miracles. It was for you. It was not for Himself that He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, that He was betrayed in the garden with a kiss, that He was mocked, beaten and nailed to the tree. It was not for Himself that He suffered and bled and died. It was for you. And so it was not for Himself that He rose from the grave and ascended into heaven. No. All of this, every bit of it was for you.

The Lord Jesus, from eternity, is full of life and righteousness, He doesn't need all this for Himself, but He does all of these things for us, to give us life and righteousness, the forgiveness of our sins.

And so, dear saints, what are you afraid of? Your sin? Jesus has shed His blood to wipe them away. The debt you owe to justice has been paid. You sin is forgotten, forgiven. Are you afraid of your shame, the things you've done? Jesus hung naked on the cross so that He might cover your shame in His robe of righteousness. Are you afraid of the threats and condemnation of the law? These were nailed to the cross, shattered on Jesus. Are you afraid of death? Jesus has built a highway through the tomb. It is the way to eternal life for all who are in Christ.

Dear saints, let us cast off fear, let us laugh and rejoice, let us be at peace with God and with each other, let us stand firm in the sure hope of the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, and so let us look at sin and death as strangers, for Jesus, the crucified and risen One, is our friend.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.



The Lord's Word is our treasure and our joy, and we rejoice in daily hearing and meditating on it. Rightly Divided is a Bible Meditation blog and Facebook group with daily insights on three chapters of the Bible. Jump in and enjoy the conversation.

rightlydividedbible.wordpress.com

Christ is Risen!

Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! The good news of Easter shines through the shadow of death. Light and life have come. Death could not hold Him. Death has lost its sting. Death is swallowed up in victory. Jesus is the victor. He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The stone is rolled away. The grave gives up; it is empty. Jesus is alive! He is not with the dead but the living. We know that our Redeemer lives! The bonds of the tomb are broken. The grave has been unlocked and the Son of David holds the key. The angels announce the good news, “He is not here! He is risen!” He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Temple that was torn down has been rebuilt in three days. The sign of Jonah has been given. Jesus is risen, the bright Morning Star, with healing in His wings. He has been raised for our justification, for our forgiveness. The Father accepts the offered sacrifice. Heaven and earth are reconciled, God is at peace with mankind. It has been declared publicly that we are redeemed, reconciled, pure, innocent and perfect in Christ. The words spoken in death ring out with life, “It is finished.” Indeed, it is finished! Indeed, He is risen! Alleluia!

The mouth of death, that is, the tomb, is empty. The First-born from the dead has come forth. The pledge and promise of our own resurrection has been given. The chains of sin and the bonds of death are broken and we are set free. The devil is our slave master no more, for he has met his own Master. Freedom has come, and peace, and life. Christ is risen! Alleluia!

On the cross Jesus was clothed with our sins, wrapped with our wickedness, but those grave clothes were left in the tomb. They did not ascend to the face of the Father. Your sin is buried. Your shame stays in the tomb. All of God's anger is spent on Jesus. There is no more for you, not one drop. No more wrath. No more destruction. No more threats or condemnation of the law. All of that is spent on Jesus. All of it, gone, for He is risen! Alleluia!

This is our joy, our comfort, our hope, our life, our salvation, our blessedness, our laughter, our peace, our forgiveness, our righteousness, our justification, our treasure, that Jesus has died for us, and that He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The power of your sin and the power of your death have been broken, destroyed, made nothing. Jesus victory over the grave is your victory.

It was not for Himself that He took on human nature in the virgin's womb. It was for you. It was not for Himself that He preached the kingdom of God

5 PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK **Wisdom 11:24–26; Psalm 57:1-3**

You have mercy on | all, O Lord,*
and abhor nothing | You have made.
You look past the sins of men that they | may repent.*
You spare them all because You are our | Lord, our God.
Be merciful to me, O God, be merci- | ful to me!*For my soul | trusts in You;
and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my | refuge,*
until these calamities have | passed by.
I will cry out to | God Most High,*
to God who performs all | things for me.
He shall send from heaven and | save me;*
God shall send forth His mercy | and His truth.

6 SAY TOGETHER THE VERSE OF THE WEEK **Luke 24:46-47**

The glory “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be preached in His Name”

7 READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION (OTHER SIDE OF THE PAGE)

8 PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE WEEK

Merciful and everlasting God, who did not spare Your only Son, but delivered Him up for us all that He might bear our sins upon the cross, grant that our hearts may be so fixed with steadfast faith in Him that we may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

9 PRAYER FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

10 SING OR SAY THE HYMN OF THE WEEK **Jesus, I Will Ponder Now**

TLH 140, LSB 440
Sigismund Von Birken



1. Jesus, I will ponder now
On Thy holy Passion;
With Thy Spirit me endow
For such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith
May the image cherish
Of Thy suffering, pain, and death,
That I may not perish.

5. If my sins give me alarm
And my conscience grieve me,
Let Thy cross my fear disarm,
Peace of conscience give me.
Grant that I may trust in Thee
And Thy holy Passion.
If His Son so loveth me,
God must have compassion.

Daily Devotions for February 15-21, 2015

SUN

SCRIPTURE: Luke 18:31–43—See, We are Going up to Jerusalem

Even as a The blind man sees what the disciples cannot grasp: Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of David, the Lord who has come to save His creation. His kingdom is not of might but of mercy. Thus, as the Lord predicts for a third time, He must be handed over, suffer affliction, be crucified, and rise again. That is His three-day coronation. And that is what makes us well. Faith makes well because it grasps this Jesus, the Crucified and Raised. Faith trusts and believes that this Son of David is crucified and raised to have mercy on me. So we follow too and set out for Jerusalem in repentance and faith.

Son of David, have mercy on us and increase our faith. Amen.

MON

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 32:9–14—The Repentance & Faithfulness of God

All the prophets point to the necessary death of Christ, the propitiation for our sins. Moses, when He stood in the breach for the people, pre-figured Christ who turned away God's wrath forever. The Lord relented from the disaster He had spoken of—literally, He “repented.” He turns because He is faithful to the promises in the Seed, which Moses had boldly (in faith) shoved back in God's face. The Lord is faithful to His promises in Christ, and in Him all wrath is turned away forever. That is the foundation for all of our repentance and faith also.

Lord, behold Your Son. Do not condemn us, but have mercy on us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

TUE

SCRIPTURE: Acts 1:15–26—St. Matthias

There's more that can be said about Judas than Matthias. Hardly anything is known about him, except his election to fill Judas's place. He is the unknown “filler” apostle. And that's fine. He is numbered among Christ's apostles. He was qualified for such an office because he had been present for all of Jesus' ministry, and therefore was fit to be a witness to His resurrection. And if all else has faded over time, that witness has not. The day before Lent, we are reminded that Jesus lives. And because of that, neither Matthias nor you are forgotten by Him.

Lord, give us faithful pastors who bear witness to Your resurrection. Amen.

WED

SCRIPTURE: Psalm: 118:15–29 — The Rejected Capstone

The Stone rejected by the builders became the capstone. The Stone was hung upon the cross by His own people. Rejecting and despising Him, they hung Him high upon a cross. And from that high throne, He became the capstone—the Stone that rolled away the stone of death from mankind's tomb. This is the marvelous doing of our Lord, who unites us to the crucified and rejected Capstone. This is the marvelous doing of God, who promises to remove the stone from your tomb to resurrect you to eternal life.

Father, keep me founded upon the Stone who was crucified and raised for me. Amen.

THU

SCRIPTURE: Luke 24:1–12 — “Remember how He told you . . .”

Our world cannot grasp that a dead man could come back to life. “It's never happened before, therefore it must be impossible.” Even the disciples struggled to grasp this promise of Jesus, even though He said it multiple times. So, the angel reminds them that Jesus promised He would die and be raised. Jesus makes the same promise for you who cling to Him—you will die and be raised. The resurrection of Jesus is also the promise of Jesus that since you were united to Him in Baptism, He will raise you eternally.

Father, keep me confident in the resurrection and ever looking forward to the life yet to come. Amen.

FRI

SCRIPTURE: Job 19:23–27 — My Once Sinful Eyes Shall See God

Sin cannot abide in the presence of God. Sinful eyes cannot see God. Even God's servant Moses through whom God gave to Israel the Torah could not look at God and live. And yet, Job expresses the absolute confidence that his eyes shall see God. Our sinful eyes, those eyes that once feasted upon sinful spectacles, have been purified by the sacrifice of Christ. They one day, redeemed from sin and transgression, resurrected from death, will behold God. You shall see Him face-to-face.

Almighty Father, prepare my eyes through Your gifts to see You with Job and all whom You have chosen. Amen.

SAT

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 118:17–18 — Disciplined and Raised

Our sins deserved nothing less than the eternal punishment of hell. So the Sinless One bears the full discipline we deserved. He was disciplined severely, but not given over to death. He died on the cross, but did not suffer eternal death. Since He was disciplined for you, neither shall God give you over to death. Yes, indeed, your mortal clay shall rest in a tomb for a little while, but you who receive Jesus shall recount the deeds of the Lord before the heavenly throne.

Christ, keep me confident in the face of discipline, and sure of my resurrection to glorify You. Amen.

Daily Devotions for April 5-11, 2015

SUN

SCRIPTURE: Mark 16:6 — His not here; He has arisen.

We can imagine the surprise of the women visiting the tomb Easter morning. Christ, whom they had seen crucified, no longer laid in the tomb. “He is not here; He has arisen,” the young man tells them. He also tells the women not to be “alarmed” or “amazed.” The entire Old Testament is the story of God working to empty the tombs of all who receive His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Let us marvel at His resurrection, but let us not be alarmed—it is what God has promised.

Father, we praise and thank you for the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

MON

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 3:14–19 — The Promised Savior from Death

Even before God cursed Adam and Eve with death, He promised the life, death, and resurrection of the One who would free humanity from death. The consequence of sin is death. The soul who sins shall die, Ezekiel prophesied. And yet, before death enters the world, God provides the solution to death. He promises the Seed of Eve would have His heel bruised while in the act of destroying the serpent and bringing life and salvation to Adam’s race.

God and Father, save us from Satan’s schemes that we might stand with the Seed of Eve on the final day. Amen.

TUE

SCRIPTURE: Corinthians 5:6–8 — A Resurrected Lump

It took only the little leaven of the forbidden fruit to leaven the entire human race with sin. From this little leaven, we find ourselves regularly leavening our lives and the lives of others with sin. But now, declares Paul, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. He makes us into a new lump, a new body, His own body. He removes the leaven of Adam’s bite so that we might celebrate the new feast. He gives us a foreshadowing of this new feast in the unleavened bread of His body and the wine of His blood.

Cleanse from us, heavenly Father, the leaven of sin that we might be resurrected to feast with You forever. Amen.

WED

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 51—Ash Wednesday

The Lord elicits confessions by His Law so that He may be justified in His words and win a victory in us. This is the “truth” He desires in our inward parts, “Amen” in our heart. He elicits an “Amen” to His Law. He brings us over to His side against our sin instead of being in our sin against Him. But He wants us justified in His Words also. He causes us to hear joy and gladness in the Absolution. “Repentance and faith” is, in one sense, redundant. True repentance includes faith. We confess because we know this God does not despise a broken heart. He is merciful in Christ’s blood that cleanses from all sin.

Have mercy and forgive my sins. Amen.

THU

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 8:5–13—Worthy Faith in the Unworthiest of Places

“I haven’t found faith like this in Israel.” That’s high praise to hear from Jesus. What sort of faith did He find so “worthy”? “Lord, I am not worthy...” Those who lie in the ashes of repentance aren’t being dour or depressing; they are being honest, and have been humbled by the Law’s truth. And yet, “only say the Word...” Faith thrives in the environment of repentance. When we are unworthy and have nothing else, then the promise of a faithful Christ is everything. Jesus’ Word has the authority to do what it says. To forgive. To save. To declare what is unworthy worthy.

Lord, I am not worthy, but give me Your Word. Amen.

FRI

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 58:1–9—Self-Righteousness or Mercy?

Isaiah was told to pour on the Law. Israel came expecting to be rewarded for their fasting and humility. They came “as if they were a nation that did righteousness.” As if! True humility is a gift from God. Trying to manufacture your own only yields self-righteous pride. The Lord has no time for that; He’s interested in mercy. That’s what He gives to those He humbles. Fasting and alms are for the sake of serving our neighbor instead of only ourselves. They are the fruit of repentance and faith. We show mercy because the Lord has mercy on us first.

Lord, turn me from myself toward you in faith, and toward my neighbor in mercy. Amen.

SAT

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 7:9–10—Godly Grief Produces Repentance Leading to Salvation

St. Paul had grieved the Corinthians with strong words of Law. But now He rejoices. They were not simply hurt; they were convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit in that Word preached by Paul. Godly grief produces repentance. We acknowledge sin and feel the terror of God’s wrath, but look in faith to Christ who has bled and died for our forgiveness. In this way, the sting of God’s Law in the conscience produces repentance with faith and leads to salvation in Christ. This is why repentance brings us into the joy of heaven (Lk 15:7).

Lord, teach us to be horrified by our sins and find comfort in Christ alone, and through faith in Him be saved. Amen.

Weekly Devotion for April 5-11, 2015

RESURRECTION



Jesus rose from the dead, as He promised. Yet the women visiting the tomb Easter morning were “alarmed” and “amazed” at what they saw. The young man encouraged them, “Do not be alarmed [amazed].” God had promised Christ’s tomb would be empty, and He promises an empty tomb for all who receive the resurrected Christ. Do not be alarmed or even amazed. It is exactly as He has told you.

5 PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK **Psalm 91:15-16, 1-2, 9-10, 13**

He shall call upon Me, and I will | answer him;*
I will deliver him and | honor him.
With long life I will sat- | isfy him,*
and show him My sal- | vation.”
He who dwells in the secret place of the | Most High*
shall abide under the shadow of the Al- | mighty.
I will say | of the Lord,*
“He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him | I will trust.”
Because you have made the Lord, who is my | refuge,*
even the Most High, your | dwelling place,
No evil shall be- | fall you,*
nor shall any plague come near your | dwelling.
You shall tread upon the lion and the | cobra,
the young lion and the serpent you shall trample | underfoot.

6 SAY TOGETHER THE VERSE OF THE WEEK **Hebrews 4:15**

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

7 READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION (OTHER SIDE OF THE PAGE)

8 PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE WEEK

O Lord, mercifully hear our prayer and stretch forth the right hand of Your majesty to defend us from those who rise up against us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

9 PRAYER FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

10 SING OR SAY THE HYMN OF THE WEEK **God the Father, Be Our Stay**

TLH 247, LSB 505
Martin Luther



(verse 1) God the Father, be our Stay,
(v2) Jesus Christ, be Thou our Stay,
(v3) Holy Ghost, be Thou our Stay,
Oh, let us perish never.
Cleanse us from our sins, we pray,
And grant us life forever.
Keep us from the Evil One;
Uphold our faith most holy,

Grant us to trust Thee solely
With humble hearts and lowly.
Let us put God's armor on:
With all true Christians running
Our heavenly race and shunning
The devil's wiles and cunning.
Amen, Amen, this be done,
So sing we, Hallelujah!

Daily Devotions for February 22-28, 2015

SUN

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 3:1-13 — The Temptation and Fall of Man

The first recorded words of any of God's creatures were Adam approving of God's creation (Genesis 2:23). He spoke the truth. The second recorded words were spoken by the devil who sought to corrupt what God had created. He deceived the woman by calling into question God's goodness. By believing the lie, Adam's trust in God was destroyed. And so was his love for his wife. Temptation is a forked tongue. But God's word confronts us in our shame to reconcile us both to himself and to each other.

Good God, speak to us always that we may flee to You who redeems Your creation. Amen.

MON

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 3:14-24 — The First Gospel Promise

The law comes before the gospel, right? True; God prepares us to receive his mercy by speaking wrath. But it's right for us Christians to hear the law with the gospel in mind—God cursed the devil and promised a Savior before he cursed our first parents! As he cursed them, God taught them to long for what was already promised. He answered their longing with a sign to confirm the promise. God removed their self-wrought covering and pointed to Christ, cloaking their shame with the first sacrifice.

Lord, in temptation let us recall Your sacrifice and not rely on our own works. Amen.

TUE

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 — The Acceptable Time

We have received grace. This means that we have been reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus, and have received God's favor in place of his disapproval. Because of this, now is the acceptable time to make use of God's grace. We need it. We need it in our temptations to impatience, despair, envy, and bitterness. We need it because our life is a struggle against our flesh. Since God is for us, now is the acceptable time to seek his help.

Lord Jesus, let me redeem the time by embracing my redemption. Amen.

6. Here I will stand beside Thee,
From Thee I will not part;
O Savior, do not chide me!
When breaks Thy loving heart,
When soul and body languish
In death's cold, cruel grasp,
Then, in Thy deepest anguish,
Thee in mine arms I'll clasp.

7. The joy can ne'er be spoken,
Above all joys beside,
When in Thy body broken
I thus with safety hide.
O Lord of life, desiring
Thy glory now to see,
Beside Thy cross expiring,
I'd breathe my soul to Thee.

8. What language shall I borrow
To thank Thee, dearest Friend,
For this, Thy dying sorrow,
Thy pity without end?
Oh, make me thine forever!
And should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never,
Outlive my love for Thee.

9. My Savior, be Thou near me
When death is at my door;
Then let Thy presence cheer me,
Forsake me nevermore!
When soul and body languish,
Oh, leave me not alone,
But take away mine anguish
By virtue of Thine own!

10. Be Thou my Consolation,
My Shield when I must die;
Remind me of Thy Passion
When my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfold Thee.
Who dieth thus dies well! Amen.

The Lutheran Hymnal, 172

A Hymn of the Passion of Jesus "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"

Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676

1. O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown.
O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.

2. Men mock and taunt and jeer Thee,
Thou noble countenance,
Though mighty worlds shall fear Thee
And flee before Thy glance.
How art thou pale with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How doth Thy visage languish
That once was bright as morn!

3. Now from Thy cheeks has vanished
Their color, once so fair;
From Thy red lips is banished
The splendor that was there.
Grim Death, with cruel rigor,
Hath robbed Thee of Thy life;
Thus Thou has lost Thy vigor,
Thy strength, in this sad strife.

4. My burden in Thy Passion,
Lord, Thou hast borne for me,
For it was my transgression
Which brought this woe on thee.
I cast me down before Thee,
Wrath were my rightful lot;
Have mercy, I implore Thee;
Redeemer, spurn me not!

5. My Shepherd, now receive me;
My Guardian, own me Thine.
Great blessings Thou didst give me,
O Source of gifts divine!
Thy lips have often fed me
With words of truth and love,
Thy Spirit oft hath led me
To heavenly joys above.

WED

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 91 — "To Keep You in All His Ways"

This Psalm is so fantastic it can hardly be addressed in so little space. Let this guide you in reading it again: God keeps you in your ways by keeping you with Christ. He leads you out of temptation, all of which is first and foremost meant to drive you from God's word. Jesus made use of God's word. God preserved him from temptation. We cling to Jesus' perfect life and death and are preserved in the way of salvation.

Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word, that we may see the enemy routed. Amen.

THU

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 4:1-11 — The Temptation of Christ

Yesterday's devotion focused on the words that Satan omitted from Psalm 91 when tempting Christ. Jesus: "Man shall ... live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Satan: "Well, eat this." He gave him God's word, but took it out of context. Jesus said that this is to tempt God. We throw ourselves off the height of the temple if we read God's word apart from God's intended meaning. But with God's word rightly taught, the devil flees, our God is worshiped, and we are saved.

Let Your Word be our refuge, O Lord, that we may steadfastly resist temptation. Amen.

FRI

SCRIPTURE: 2 Samuel 11:2-4 — "Beautiful to Behold"

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate." All temptation is the same. We desire what God has denied us. Our pride fuels our appetite, leaving us ugly and dead. Yet God calls beautiful not what we see, but what he sees. He sees our honor, glory, and wisdom not in our taking, but in our receiving.

Gracious Father, give what we have not deserved, that we may receive the forgiveness which Your Son has earned. Amen.

SAT

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 4:14-16 — Tempted Without Sin

A High Priest pleads for God's people. Our High Priest, who stands before the Father in heaven, has experienced everything that can possibly afflict us. We are God's people because this One has redeemed us with his most precious blood. We approach God by approaching our Brother. We do so with confidence, even when we have been soiled by our failures and sinful indulgences. He sympathizes not as our Judge who shames us with his success, but as our Mediator who makes his success our own.

Son of God, keep us in our confession of this truth, since You even now confess us before Your Father in heaven. Amen.

The Suffering of Jesus

Pastor Jared Melius

The worst suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross was not physical. After all, as horrific as was the flogging, the beating, and the nails, crucifixion was not uncommon in the Roman Empire. Even as Jesus suffered physically, two other men suffered in the same way on either side of Him. If His physical suffering were the worst part of it, then we would have to conclude that His suffering was not unique.

The true horror of the cross is revealed in those haunting words of Jesus, spoken roughly midway through the six hours, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?” Jesus was being punished for sins, and the just punishment for sins is rejection by God. In fact, it was at just that point that Jesus was suffering Hell. Remember, Hell is not a place, it is the state of being cast away from God, just as much as Heaven is the state of being accepted by and brought near to God.

So, let us be clear. Strictly speaking, no one, not David or Job or you or I, can ever pray the prayer that Jesus prayed then. In this life, God has forsaken no one – ever! – except His Son Jesus on the cross. He has never forsaken you. The words, “why have you forsaken me?” belong in the mouth of our Savior alone.

So, let us not get too overwhelmed with the physical nature of Our Lord’s suffering that we forget that the real suffering was spiritual.

Then Jesus, while yet on the cross, said “I am thirsty”. You can tell from this word that the pains of Hell had been lifted and that the Father had returned to the Son. That is the only way to explain Jesus’ concern for His physical state. After all, who would be concerned with thirst when they are suffering the pains of Hell? Then Jesus said “It is finished.” What was finished? Clearly He doesn’t mean His physical suffering had finished because He was still on the cross. The thing finished was His work of atoning for sins. The Father was satisfied. The price was paid. The world’s guilt was gone. The Father had returned to Him. Our salvation was accomplished already before Jesus breathed His last breath. All that remained was the residual physical discomfort of crucifixion and death, a small thing compared to being forsaken by God.

Finally, Jesus said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Let’s make sure to take those words very seriously. Jesus was not simply saying, “Father, I know you’ll take care of me.” He was deliberately committing His human soul into the hands of God, even while He knew that His human body would shortly be committed into the hands of Joseph and Nicodemus.

WED

SCRIPTURE: Luke 22:39-40: Holy Prayer through Suffering (St. Luke 22:1-23:56)

Judas, soldiers, death. The only preparation for this devilish onslaught is prayer to His heavenly Father. *“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.”* He leaves His own desires at the Father’s throne. The Father’s will has been clear for the ages. It is to love fallen man. So Jesus must bear that cup of suffering. The angel helps Him, though He drops sweat like blood in the face of this agony. He will win salvation. He will conquer death. He will do His Father’s will. Even in His humble state, He is resolute to win your salvation.

O Lord, help me to deny myself and bear my crosses. Amen.

THU

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 11:23-32: The Lord Gives His Holy Supper to His Church

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus stoops down and washes His disciples’ feet. This night He forever alters the worship of God’s people. By His coming, He fulfills the Old Testament, and He leaves “a new testament.” Jesus gives His disciples a supper of His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. This is “the Lord’s Supper,” as St. Paul calls it. Through a pastor’s hands, Jesus gives the gifts poor Christians need, beat down by the demands of their vocations. Here you taste His mercy, His love, the sinner’s justification in His very body and blood.

O Lord, forgive my sins. Make me one with You and Your Church of all ages by Your body and blood. Amen.

FRI

SCRIPTURE: John 19:1-42: The Holy Sufferings of Our Lord (St. John 18:1-19:42)

Ecce Homo, behold the Man! Pilate says. He hangs whipped, bloodied, and beaten. His brow drips blood and sweat. The cruel cross is the glorious throne of your dying King. He dies for sin, big and little alike. Consider the weight of that glory, of His holy sufferings for you. He empties the cup of God’s wrath to the dregs for you. Love is costly. But all is paid by this dying King. *“It is finished,”* hear Him cry. Your sin goes with Him. He wins the world’s salvation. Trust this Man, this Jesus! His holy sufferings are your salvation.

O dearest Jesus, grant that in Your holy wounds I find forgiveness of my sin and peace of conscience. Amen.

SAT

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27:57-66: Holy Death to Life (St. Matthew 26:1-27:66)

“O sorrow dread, our God is dead” (LSB 448), wrote the hymnist Johann Rist. The rich man Joseph obtains Jesus’ body. He wraps our dead Lord. Joseph lays the holy One – the embodiment of Life itself – on a bed of death. Death is made holy by Jesus’ passion. The grave is now sanctified for Christians. Jesus didn’t remain there. His Father’s will was to bring Him through death to life. Easter is coming. Jesus proclaims victory in Satan’s face and to those in hell. He is risen. Joy is near.

O Lord, you have sanctified all of life for me. By Your death and resurrection, Grant that I may fear the grave as little as I fear my pillow. Amen.

Daily Devotions for March 29-April 4,

SUN

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 21:1-9: Common Glory to Holy Cross

Now You have glory and the people in your hands, O Lord. They sing hosannas and cling to your words. They strew palm branches before You. They welcome You as King – greater than Caesar - riding on a beast of peace. This holy week is different. This holy week leads to Your end. *“In lowly pomp, ride on to die.”*

Flesh is fickle, slow to believe. Many in the crowds will cry “Crucify Him, crucify Him” at week’s end. You are our humble King, who goes to the cross to die in our place. Baptized we too have died to sin, once for all.

Keep us, O Lord, in your death and resurrection, that we might be found faithful in the day of judgment. Amen.

MON

SCRIPTURE: John 12:1-43: The Time of Jesus’ Holy Hour

When God created day and night, He created time. But it was not long until the fall into sin. The days of the darkness of man’s sin were long. The days had to be fulfilled. Time marched on until finally Jesus’ hour had come. His hour was the time of His glorification. It was a shameful death for a glorious King. By this death, your shameful sins are covered. Jesus is lifted up on the cross, and now draws you to Himself by His grace. Now and for eternity, you are His.

O Lord, In your hour, you were glorified in death. Help me to trust in your death for me as my salvation. Amen.

TUE

SCRIPTURE: Mark 14:1-15:47: Faith in Spite of the Betrayal of Men

The chief priest and scribes sought to kill Him. Judas Iscariot sold his Savior for filthy lucre. Peter, James, and John fall asleep. *“The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.”* The disciples and a young man flees. The leadership of the Jews finds Jesus guilty. Peter denies three times. The soldiers mock, not protect. Jesus dies for betrayers, for weak-willed men and women alike. Even for you He died, for your sin. Now take up your baptism today. No more the betrayer, no more weak-willed Christians, no more cowering before men, only trust in God. By faith, you are innocent with Christ’s innocence.

Lord I believe, help Thou my unbelief. Amen.

In other words, Jesus died as a Christian. His body went into the ground; His soul returned to God who made it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The bodies of Christians die, but not their souls. This is why Jesus can say to Martha, “whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.” (John 11:15)

Earlier, Jesus had proclaimed to the repentant thief that they would be together in Paradise that very day. Friday. Not in a few days. Not some symbolic “today.” Both of them would die that day and they would both be together in Paradise on Friday. Their cleansed and perfect souls would be together, in the Father’s hand, immediately at their death.

As is the case with all Christians, that separation of body and soul at death is only temporary. For Jesus it lasted barely 36 hours. Put simply, Easter is the day that the body of Jesus is re-united with His soul. In principle, the resurrection of Jesus is no different than the resurrection of all Christians on the final day, bodies and souls re-united, alive and out of the grave. Forever.

Pastor Melius
Mt Zion Lutheran Church
Denver, Colorado



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Weekly Devotion for March 1-7, 2015

PRAYER



Jesus suffered the weakness of His disciples. They wanted Jesus to send the Syro-Phoenician woman away. Jesus did not send her away, for He was sent for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and for this woman, whose faith was great, for it was in her Lord, the Son of David. Jesus suffered our weaknesses, first, by becoming Man (incarnate). He suffered the weakness of human flesh by being circumcised in His flesh, by suffering the blasphemies of the religious leaders of His day, by enduring the temptations of the devil. In suffering our weaknesses, He won the victory that sin, death, and hell held over us, by His death and resurrection.

5 PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK **Psalm 22:19, 21, 1, 7-8, 11**

But You, O Lord, do not be | far from Me;*
O My Strength, hasten to | help Me!
Save Me from the | lion's mouth*
and from the horns of the wild | oxen!
My God, My God, why have You for- | saken Me?*

Why are You so far from | helping Me.
All those who see Me ridi- | cule Me;*
they shoot out the lip, they | shake the head.
They say "He trusted in the Lord, let Him | rescue Him;*"
let Him deliver Him, since He de- | lights in Him!"
Be not far from Me, for trou- | ble is near;*
for there is | none to help.

6 SAY TOGETHER THE VERSE OF THE WEEK **Isaiah 53:5**

"But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed."

7 READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION (OTHER SIDE OF THE PAGE)

8 PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE WEEK

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon Him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility, mercifully grant that we may both be guided by His patience in this life and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

9 PRAYER FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

10 SING OR SAY THE HYMN OF THE WEEK

A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

TLH 142, LSB 438

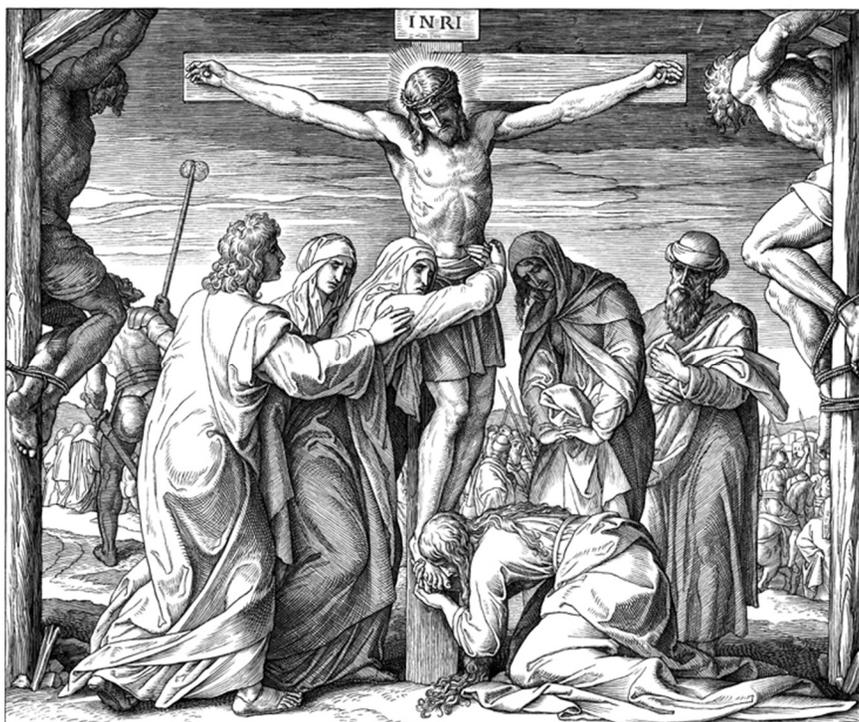
Paul Gerhardt



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
The guilt of all men bearing;
And laden with the sins of earth,
None else the burden sharing!
Goes patient on, grow weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
That spotless life to offer:
Bears shame and stripes, and wounds and
death,
Anguish and mockery, and saith,
"Willing all this I suffer." | 4. From morn till eve my theme shall be
Thy mercy's wondrous measure;
To sacrifice myself for Thee
Shall be my aim and pleasure.
My stream of life shall ever be
A current flowing ceaselessly,
Thy constant praise outpouring.
I'll treasure in my memory,
O Lord, all Thou hast done for me,
Thy gracious love adoring. |
|--|--|

Weekly Devotion for March 29-April 4, 2015

CRUCIFIXION



Holy week begins in glory. In His holy passion, Jesus suffered the unheard of fickleness of human sin. He endured betrayal by His own disciples and divinely-given authorities around Him. Yet He pressed on toward the cross, steadfast in prayer. In the midst of these holy sufferings, Jesus gives His “new testament” – His holy Supper for His Holy Church. On Good Friday, we hear, “It is finished,” salvation is won. Holy Saturday anticipates the joy of the resurrection. You may read the Scripture selection alone, or, you may choose to read an entire Passion account in parentheses from each of the Gospels.

5 PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK **Psalm 25:6, 2, 1-2, 7-8, 11**

Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your loving- | kindnesses,*
for they are | from of old.
Let not my enemies triumph | over me.*
Redeem Israel, O God, out of all their | troubles!
To You, O Lord, I lift | up my soul.*
O my God, I trust in You; let me not | be ashamed;
do not remember the sins | of my youth;*
according to Your mercy remember me for Your | goodness' sake.
Good and upright | is the Lord;*
therefore He teaches sinners | in the way.
For Your name's | sake, O Lord,*
pardon my iniquity, for | it is great.

6 SAY TOGETHER THE VERSE OF THE WEEK **Matthew 15:26**

But He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’

7 READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION (OTHER SIDE OF THE PAGE)

8 PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE WEEK

O God, our heavenly Father, seeing that of ourselves we have no strength, keep us both outwardly and inwardly that we may be defended from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

9 PRAYER FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

10 SING OR SAY THE HYMN OF THE WEEK

TLH 522, LSB 615

Paul Eber

When In the Hour of Utmost Need



1. When in the hour of utmost need We know not where to look for aid; When days and nights of anxious thought Nor help nor counsel yet have brought,	5. And thus we come, O God, today And all our woes before Thee lay; For sorely tried, cast down, we stand, Perplexed by fears on every hand.
4. For Thou hast promised graciously To hear all those who cry to Thee Through Him whose name alone is great, Our Savior and our Advocate.	6. Ah! hide not for our sins Thy face, Absolve us through Thy boundless grace, Be with us in our anguish still, Free us at last from every ill

Daily Devotions for March 1-7, 2015

SUN

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 15:21-28: Faith In His Mercy

Normally, it is not polite or complimentary to call a human being a “dog.” Even so, Jesus’ words are true, and the woman believes they are true. Only faith believes Jesus’ words are true. With that faith, she confessed, Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. (v. 27) Her faith was great, because her Lord gave her faith in His mercy, the very faith by which she cried out to Him in the first place (v. 22), calling Him by name. Faith does not stop crying out to the Lord for mercy, even when God does not answer right away (v. 23).

Lord, give us the desires of faith, which cries to You for mercy. Amen.

MON

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 32:22-32: The Weakness of Jacob’s Flesh

No one wins a wrestling match with God, including Jacob, whose hip socket was put out of joint by God (v. 25). This Man (v. 24) did change Jacob’s name to Israel (v. 28), and He blessed Israel there (v. 29). To this day, the children of Israel do not eat the flesh of the hip socket, because God touched it (v. 32). Our flesh, like Jacob’s, is weak. The maladies of our body are evidence of the struggles of the soul (v. 28) that we have. The God who created us as body and soul, is the same Man who came in the body to die on the cross, redeeming us, body and soul, from sin, death, and the devil.

God, keep blessing us in the name of Your Son. Amen.

TUE

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7: Comfort in Suffering

Suffering is not comforting, but the God of all comfort, *comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (v. 4)*. In other words, the comfort of God is contagious. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ *is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort (v. 3)*. The sufferings of Christ abound in everyone who is a new creation in Christ Jesus, who died on the cross in order to comfort us with justification...the forgiveness of our sins, being raised from the dead, never to die again.

Father, comfort us and others with the comfort of Jesus. Amen.

In cleansing the Temple, he was serving all sinners by setting himself to be killed at the hands of the scribes and the chief priests, so that in that death, he shed his holy blood. In casting out the money-changers, Jesus didn’t actually cleanse the Temple. For, cleansing only comes by the shedding of blood.

When Jesus did die on the cross, darkness fell over the whole land, the Earth shook, the veil of the Temple was ripped top to bottom.

That’s the cleansing of the Temple. Because, at the holy blood shed on the cross, the Temple of God among men, God’s dwelling place among sinners, is no longer the stone Temple, but Jesus—his person, his body, his blood.

Jesus is now the dwelling of God on Earth. That’s where the sinner will find the Temple of God, the location of God dwelling among men for his purpose of forgiveness and grace.

Now he cleanses another temple: you. In Baptism, he joins you to his cross. By his gift, as you live in forgiveness, your body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:20:

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price.

In the Name of Jesus.



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True Cleansing of the Temple

Pastor Warren Graff

Jesus is acting like a leader, finally. Going into the Temple, seeing the sinners, he throws the bums out:

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." (John 2:16)

Is this the same Jesus who said to love your neighbor as yourself? To turn the other cheek? To forgive others as your Father in Heaven forgives you?

Can the Jesus of grace and gentleness and mercy be the same Jesus as the one forcefully throwing folks out of the Temple?

It's the same Jesus. His cleansing of the Temple is part of his journey to the cross:

Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves . . . Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might kill Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. (Mark 11:18)

At first, he looks like a great leader establishing his power over the scribes and the chief priests. Jesus is actually doing the opposite. In expelling these money-changers from the Temple, he is willingly consigning himself to death at their hands. Because, what else could the scribes and chief priests and money-changers be expected to do, but to kill the man who publically calls them unclean? So Jesus threw them out, knowing that it means his death.

In cleansing the Temple, Jesus first looked like a leader seizing control. But he came to be a servant—to serve his Father by saving the sinners his Father loved, to serve sinners by giving them that which they could not gain on their own: salvation from sin.

WED

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 102:23-28: Weakened Strength

God weakens our strength and shortens our days (v. 23), but He does not do so in order to destroy us, but to cause us to trust only in Him. The afflictions of the one who belongs to the Lord are many, but they all, without exception, are designed by Him to keep us in the faith. He who laid the foundation of the earth and created the heavens, will endure forever (v. 26). The Lord is the same, and His years have no end. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In what appeared to be weakened strength, He crushed the head of the Serpent on the cross, demonstrating His power over sin and death.

Lord, keep us strong in You. Amen.

THU

SCRIPTURE: Mark 8:31-33: Suffering Many Things

Jesus suffered many things...*by the elders and chief priests and scribes (v. 31)*. He also suffered the devilish unbelief of His own disciple Peter, who rebuked Jesus, denying that He would ever go to the cross and be killed. Jesus did the only thing He could do as the suffering servant of His Father. He rebuked Peter: *Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men (v. 33)*. Jesus not only suffered under the hands of the religious leaders who hated Him, and also Peter His disciple. He suffered for our sins on the cross, being mindful of God's things for our salvation.

Jesus: thank you for suffering for us. Amen.

FRI

SCRIPTURE: Lamentations 3:49-58: Redeemed from Suffering

Enemies are on the prowl. Desolation and destruction are realities. *My eyes bring suffering to my soul because of all the daughters of my city (v. 51)*. *O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul; You have redeemed my life (v. 58)*. The only rescue in times of destruction, desolation, and the pursuit of enemies, is the Lord who hears our voices and does not hide His ear from our sighing (v. 56). The Lord says, *do not fear! (v. 57)*, and we are comforted and calmed. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ humbles His enemies and exalts His people through faith, for He hears our voices.

Lord: thank you for redeeming us from suffering. Amen.

SAT

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27:15-26: Suffering Things In A Dream

Pontius Pilate's wife didn't want him to have anything to do with the just Man (v. 19). She had suffered things in a dream because of Him. Yet, He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried (Nicene Creed). It was necessary for Jesus to suffer for the sins of the world, and then be raised again the third day. Through His sufferings comes our rescue from eternal suffering for our sins. Jesus lived a life of suffering so that we could have the forgiveness of sins, the promise of eternal life through faith in His name. His suffering atones God's wrath against sin. *Jesus: keep our eyes focused on your suffering for us. Amen.*

Weekly Devotions for March 8-14, 2015

The Trouble of the DEVIL



Kingdoms of men may have an iron grip for generations but all inevitably pass into the forgetfulness of history. Neither their leaders nor people can escape sin, death, and the Devil. Satan builds his Kingdom of Darkness on the ruins of humanity. Yet, hope has not abandoned mankind and an eternal King has scattered the darkness with His Kingdom of Light. This Christ has defeated the Devil's dark designs by shattering sin on the cross, entering the darkness of death in His tomb, and bursting forth on the third day binding the devil to his dark pit forever. In so doing he has freed you too that you may be transferred from death to life, darkness to light.

WED

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:26-38 Suffering with Mary

March 25th is nine months before Christmas and the Church celebrates the Annunciation of the angel to Mary that she is to bear the Son of God. The news of a pregnancy doesn't usually lead to thoughts of suffering, but we also know that Simon told Mary that a sword would pierce her soul (Luke 2:35). Mary must watch the Son of God bear the weight of the cross and bear the burden of her sin and all sin. She watches the suffering of Jesus and we watch with her. We watch knowing that He does it for us. Our sins cause it and His love endures it.

LORD, you announced the coming of Christ to earth, open my ears to hear your Word about Jesus. Amen.

THU

SCRIPTURE: Mark 4:35-41 Suffering with the Disciples

Illness, disease, natural calamity, or man-made disaster can cause us to be fearful of dying. The disciples felt scared when they saw the winds and waves and Jesus asleep in the stern of the boat. While they die, Jesus sleeps. While we suffer, Jesus seems far off. But our feelings don't tell us what the truth is. The truth is that Jesus is close to those who suffer. Jesus awakes and says, "Peace! Be still!" Your peace comes from Jesus and our faith is firmly rooted in him who commands even the winds and the sea.

LORD, ease my fears and strengthen my faith in you. Amen.

FRI

SCRIPTURE: Zechariah 13:7-9 Suffering with the One Third

Zechariah writes that two thirds will perish and one third will be left alive. But even that third ends up in the fire. Fire burns and even kills. But fire is also used to purify. Silver and gold are refined and tested. In the fire the impurities are removed and the remaining metal is purer than when it entered the fire. You are the one third that is being purified by suffering. It is painful and hurts but yet you learn to grow in faith and trust in the one who has saved your life from the eternal fire by his cross and resurrection.

LORD, make me holy as you are holy. Amen.

SAT

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 88:1-18 Suffering with the God of your Salvation

Psalm 88 feels like a psalm of deep depression. You look within its words and you find suffering heaped upon more suffering. You might even look for a glimmer of hope in the end of the Psalm but it's not there. The hope is found in the very first verse. The Lord is described as the God of my salvation. The Lord saves from all the suffering that is described. Think about how bad you have it, have had it, your friend has it, or your family has suffering. The Lord is still the God of salvation. He provides salvation even when the suffering seems unbearable.

O LORD, God of my salvation, deliver me from my enemies. Amen.

Daily Devotions for March 22-28, 2015

SUN

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 22:1-14 Suffering with Abraham

It has been said that the Lord is a cruel and mean god to demand child sacrifice of those who follow him. And perhaps for believing Abraham it feels like cruel and unusual punishment that God would demand the sacrifice of his son, his only son. But the seeming cruelty and the attendant suffering is for the benefit of Abraham and you. For Abraham grows in faith, knowing that the Lord will provide. For you grow in faith seeing the faith of Abraham and trusting that in the midst of suffering your God will continue to provide for you. Suffering does not mean the absence of God.

Father, be with me in my suffering that I may grow in faith. Amen.

MON

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 3:14-19 Suffering with Adam & Eve

The consequence of Adam and Eve's sin is death. That death takes the form of painful childbearing, cursed ground, and finally returning to the dust. The suffering that Adam and Eve brought into this world by their disobedience is felt by you. Just as you share in Adam's flesh, you share in his suffering. The deliverance of Adam's suffering comes from the promise that was made to the serpent. The offspring of the woman, the offspring of Mary, crushes the head of Satan and defeats suffering that leads to death. Suffer with Adam, live with Adam in Jesus.

Lord, Thank you for sending my suffering Savior. Amen.

TUE

SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:1-11 Suffering with Joy

Rejoicing in suffering doesn't mean you should smile as you suffer and laugh in between the bitter tears. It means that you should see suffering for what it is: opportunity to produce endurance, character, and love. Suffering produces fruit in us because we are connected to the sufferings of Christ by faith in Him. His sufferings produced forgiveness and salvation for His people. Because the suffering of Jesus is for you no amount of suffering can take the peace of Christ from you. The strength of Christ is yours. Rejoice in the Lord always!

Father, use my suffering to produce endurance, character, and hope that clings to Jesus. Amen.

5

PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK **Psalms 25:15-16. 1-2, 17-18, 20**

My eyes are ever | toward the Lord,*
for He shall pluck my feet out | of the net.
Turn Yourself to me, and have mer- | cy on me,*
for I am desolate and af- | flicted.
To You, O Lord, I lift | up my soul.*
O my God, I trust in You; let me not | be ashamed;
the troubles of my heart | have enlarged;*
bring me out of | my distresses!
Look on my affliction | and my pain,*
and forgive | all my sins.
Keep my soul, and de- | liver me;*
let me not be ashamed, for I put my | trust in You.

6

SAY TOGETHER THE VERSE OF THE WEEK **Luke 11:20**

"But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you."

7

READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION (OTHER SIDE OF THE PAGE)

8

PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE WEEK

We implore You, almighty and merciful Father, to look upon the hearty desires of Your humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Your majesty to be our defense 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. Amen.

9

PRAYER FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

10

SING OR SAY THE HYMN OF THE WEEK

TLH 258, LSB 659

Lord of Our Life and God of Our Salvation

Matthaus Apelles von Lowenstern



1. Lord of our life and God of our salvation,
Star of our night and Hope of every nation,
Hear and receive Thy Church's supplication,
Lord God Almighty.

3. Lord, Thou canst help when earthly armor
faileth;
Lord, Thou canst save when deadly sin assaileth;
Lord, o'er Thy Church nor death nor hell pre-
vaileth;
Grant us Thy peace, Lord:

4. Peace in our hearts, our evil thoughts assuag-
ing;
Peace in Thy Church where brothers are engaging;
Peace when the world its busy war is waging.
Calm Thy foes' raging.

5. Grant us Thy help till backward they are driven;
Grant them Thy truth that they may be forgiven;
Grant peace on earth or, after we have striven,
Peace in Thy heaven.

Daily Devotions for March 8-14, 2015

SUN

SCRIPTURE: Luke 11:28 Blessed Hearing

The blessing applies to those that not only hear but also ‘keep’ God’s Word. How? By placing faith in that Word of God and acting on it because it is true. The blessing? The Word generates the faith it calls for. It keeps you. The Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, keeps you. He keeps you in His kingdom and nothing can remove you from His hand. He guards your life by defeating death and Satan’s kingdom through the cross. The Word, risen from the Grave, is living and active to bless you and keep you.

Heavenly Father, Bless me through your Word by your Spirit, In Jesus name. Amen.

MON

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 8:19 God’s Finger

Plague after plague Pharaoh’s devilish magicians copied the works of God, until the gnats. Then they recognized a powerful King beyond theirs. Just God’s ‘finger’ defeated all efforts of Pharaoh and his kingdom. The God’s ‘finger’ in Egypt’s plagues is frightening unless you see that His ‘finger’ was extended in mercy to deliver Israel from slavery. This foreshadowed God extending his fleshy finger, arm, and body in mercy on the cross to deliver you from slavery to sin and death. Satan may howl fierce as he will, but he and his kingdom is no match for the finger of God.

Gracious Father, I thank you that with an outstretched arm your Son delivered from me sin and death. Amen.

TUE

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:5 Inheritors

Inheriting a kingdom is through blood by being born of the royal line. We do not have that lineage to place us in God’s Kingdom. Indeed we are less than regal and more slaves to our passions. Yet, “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God.” The Son of God comes in flesh that by His royal blood shed we may become children of light. You receive His blood at the altar for the forgiveness of sins, His testament confessing that you are now a blood inheritor of God’s Kingdom.

Gracious Lord, help me to live as your child and remember your mercy. Amen.

5

PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK **Psalm 43:1-2, 3-5**

Vindicate | me, O God,*
and plead my cause against an ungodly | nation;
oh, deliver me from the deceitful and | unjust man!*
for You are the God | of my strength; (Psalm 43:1–2)
Oh, send out Your light | and Your truth!*
Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your | holy hill.
Then I will go to the al- | tar of God,*
to God my ex- | ceeding joy.
Why are you cast down, | O my soul?*
And why are you disquieted with- | in me?
Hope in God; for I shall yet | praise Him,*
the help of my countenance | and my God.

6

SAY TOGETHER THE VERSE OF THE WEEK **Genesis 22:12**

“He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.’”

7

READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION (OTHER SIDE OF THE PAGE)

8

PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE WEEK

We implore You, almighty God, merciful Father, look upon Your people that by Your great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

9

PRAYER FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

10

SING OR SAY THE HYMN OF THE WEEK

TLH 151, LSB 420

Christ, the Life of All the Living

Ernst Christoph Homburg



1. Christ, the Life of all the living,
Christ, the Death of death, our foe,
Who, Thyself for me once giving
To the darkest depths of woe,—
Through thy sufferings, death, and merit
I eternal life inherit:
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

6. Thou hast suffered great affliction
And hast borne it patiently,
Even death by crucifixion,
Fully to atone for me;
Thou didst choose to be tormented
That my doom should be prevented.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

Weekly Devotion for March 22-28, 2015

SUFFERING



The theme of this week's devotions is suffering. We may be tempted to believe that suffering is for unbelievers and if we just believe strong enough then suffering will decrease and eventually cease. Instead we are told to rejoice in suffering, that suffering produces endurance, that God's people are refined in the refiner's fire. Jesus, in his suffering, endured the punishment of your sin. Now, having sanctified suffering, you look upon suffering not as something to avoid but instead as something to rejoice in because God gives his peace to those who suffer and his grace is for those who endure in His name.

WED

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 136:1 O Give Thanks

My Grandmother prays this verse at every meal. She learned it around a meager family table during the Great Depression. A strange setting to learn thanksgiving to God, yet, he is good. Seasons run their course, droughts and depressions come but then go. His mercy endureth forever. Through hard times, weak faith, through our foibles and sins, God is a King who remains constant to His nature and promises. See the Son and see God's nature: loving, merciful, poured out on the Cross. There the enduring promise of forgiveness is not undone by our weakness.

O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: His mercy endureth forever. Amen.

THU

SCRIPTURE: Luke 11:20 No Match For God's Kingdom

Here Jesus is the Finger of God, His hands and fingers and voice casting out devils. God in the flesh. The conclusion follows: The Kingdom of God has come for the devils' work is terminated. If only Jesus would walk with us today and use that finger to cast out the problems that bedevil us. He does! In the Gospel proclaimed in your ear (Word) and done to you (Sacraments) He casts away all the works of Satan. And if He casts out these devilish things the conclusion follows: His Kingdom has come and is coming.

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

FRI

SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 26:2 God Speaks

Prophets are called to speak God's Word, including law and judgment. Jeremiah was commanded to speak law and not leave out one word. The Temple would be destroyed if Judah did not turn from evil. God desired His people to turn from death to life. They nearly stoned Jeremiah at that word. Pastors today are called to proclaim Gospel but also Law and not diminish a word. God still desires His people to turn from death to life in Christ. Listen to and encourage your Pastor as he strives to bring you undiminished both Law and Gospel.

Heavenly Father, Bless my Pastor as he prepares this week's sermon(s) and bless my listening. Amen.

SAT

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 25:1 My Eyes are Ever Toward the Lord

This verse reminds us what the Christian life is about: To keep our eyes ever toward the Lord. The surprise is that we find Him looking back. He keeps His eye on us. He always has. Even when we close our eyes in sleep, even in death, His eye is on us. You are not just some peasant in His Kingdom but His treasured possession, His very child born of water and Royal Decree. With this confidence our eyes are ever toward our Lord, expectant for His grace and strength throughout the days of a new week. *Lord, forgive the sins of this week and look upon me as your dear child through and because of Your Son Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.*

The Horrible Beauty of the Crucifix

Pastor Jonathan Fisk

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)*

There is nothing beautiful about a crucifix. It is hard to look at one for very long. No matter the care and the craft with which an artist strives to demonstrate the wisdom of Jesus, how he is high and lifted up, like a snake on a pole, the exalted act of God Almighty, taken once and for all, to draw all sinful mankind back to himself, no matter how refined the art and how exquisite the beauty of the detail, there remains nothing beautiful about a crucifix. It calls to mind the high horror and the ugliness with which our species treated each other, capable and willing not merely to murder and destroy, but to take great effort and exert great thought into how much pain we can possibly cause while we do so. Worse, not only have we done this to each other throughout our history, but we have done this to the Son of God.

And so here he is, in all our ugliness, in all our sin, in what we have done and in what we have left undone. And who can bear to look upon it. His appearance is marred, his body is contorted, his torture is rigorous and so clearly wrong.

And this is the Gospel - here, this ugly. This is what the Bible says. This is what our life in this veil of tears is all out about. Our ugliness. His beauty. Combined, inverted, cast down and lifted up. To fix. To redeem. To restore.

So he sprinkled us, people of the nations, with blood that flowed from hands and feet pierced, from head crowded with thistles, from back scourged with bone. Who cannot but shut their mouth when they stare upon such a sight. That which we would rather ignore, that which our flesh ever tries to forget, that which we would not remember about ourselves and what we rightly deserve, we are forced again to see when we look upon a crucifix.

Here he bore our griefs, carried our pains, stricken, smitten and afflicted, not only by us but also by God his Father whose will it was to crush him, not for wicked intent or sadistic pleasure, but for our transgressions, for our iniquities, that in his piercing God brought upon him the chastisement which you have deserved, and so with these wounds, peace with God is earned by Jesus. Pierced and dead, and hanging on a cross, Jesus buys you life. A lamb without spot or blemish, led to the slaughter silently, never

WED

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 49: A Life Not Worth Living

Psalm 49 is a reflection on the life of those who are rich in things but poor in soul. The wealth which they rely on will be given to others after they are dead. They cannot pay death off; they cannot bribe the grave. It doesn't pay to be the richest man in the cemetery because you cannot take it with you. This is not a life worth living because one cannot be redeemed by gold or silver. Our hope lies in God, who has redeemed our souls from the power of the grave. Through the blood of Jesus, we shall live and not perish like the beasts. Death shall not feed upon us, for we feed upon the body and blood of Jesus. By it, we shall live forever. *Heavenly Father, turn us from the love of riches to the love of Your Dear Son. Amen.*

THU

SCRIPTURE: John 4:46-54- Jesus' Word gives life

Sickness is a great threat to our earthly lives. There is no greater feeling of helplessness than watching your children suffer from sickness. The nobleman had heard about Jesus. He rushed to Him and begged him to save his son. Jesus speaks the word and the man believes Him. We don't receive words of physical healings from Jesus, but we do receive and believe words like this, "I forgive you," "I will never leave you nor forsake you," and "This is my body." These words give eternal life. And, like the nobleman, we too can go our way, knowing the power of Jesus' word and His great love for us. *Lord Jesus, speak Your promises to us so that we too might believe in Your Word. Amen.*

FRI

SCRIPTURE: Job 14-1-14: The Life of Everyman

Job faced his mortality. His children were dead, his goods were gone, and his skin was rotten and full of sores. But Job reflects, not only on his own misery, but also on the misery of all mankind. We are not like the tree. We don't grow back after we are cut down. We suffer as hired men. We get one life here on earth and then we wither like flowers and flee like shadows. Why? Because we are unclean, with sin. We were born unclean and we pass this uncleanness to our children. But there was one Man, born of woman, who was clean. He suffered and died so that we might have renewal and relief. We shall live again on account of Christ. *Lord Jesus, cleanse us from our uncleanness and by Your resurrection grant us renewal. Amen.*

SAT

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 2:11-21: Life by Faith in the Son of God

There are two ways for sinners to live. They can live under the law. But a life under the law leads nowhere. No one can be declared righteous by the Law. This was Peter's problem. He weakened and made a bad pastoral call. Peter needed to be rebuked by the very Law which he placed on the necks of others. And so, God sent Paul. Paul preached the Law, but He also reminded Peter of another life, a different life. This is the life of faith. This is a life based upon the death and resurrection of Jesus. He loved us and gave Himself up for us on the cross. In His death, we are dead to the Law. In His resurrection, we live to God. *Holy Spirit, give us the life of faith in the Son of God, who gave Himself for us. Amen.*

Daily Devotions for March 15-21, 2015

SUN

SCRIPTURE: John 6:1-15: Daily Bread given by the Bread of Life

“Give us this day our daily bread.” We pray this petition daily, but many of us have never felt hunger pangs. Many of us have never gone without food. It is easy to forget that everything we need is given by Jesus. In the reading, Jesus provided food for the crowds in a miraculous manner. Today, Jesus provides food for us through means. Jesus provides for our physical life. But Jesus offers the crowds and us something greater. He offers eternal life. He offers Himself, the Bread of Life. Anyone who comes to Jesus will never hunger, and whoever believes in Him shall never thirst. May God give us Jesus, the Bread from heaven always.

Dear Jesus, provide us with daily bread as you feed us with Yourself, the Bread of Life. Amen.

MON

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 33:12-23: Looking Life in the Face

No one can see the face of God and live. Sinners cannot stand in the presence of a holy and righteous God. The Life of all the living can kill. But God is also merciful. He has compassion upon whom He will have compassion. To Moses, our merciful God showed His back. We are far more privileged. When we speak to Jesus, we are speaking to God face to face. In the incarnation, God's face no longer brings death. On the contrary, the face of Jesus brings us life everlasting. God's face is now a human face. This face was slapped and beaten for you. Now you can stand without fear before the face of God and speak to Him as a son.

Lord Jesus, thank you for taking on a human face so that we might look at You without fear. Amen.

TUE

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 4:21-31: The life of Slavery and the Life of the Promise

Sarah and Hagar are two women mentioned in the book of Genesis. Sarah was Abraham's wife, Hagar was Sarah's slave. Both knew Abraham and both received sons from Him. Our God so ordained it that their lives would be a reflection of our lives. We are not slaves. We, like Isaac, are children of the promise. Isaac was born by God's promise to Abraham. We were born by God's promise given to us at our baptisms. Isaac was promised so that the Messiah could be born through his line. We were given promises because the Messiah was born and died so that we could live. We live by God's promises. We are His sons, not His slaves.

Heavenly Father, thank you for making me like Isaac, a child of the promise. Amen.

opening his mouth to protest, although he had done no violence, and never uttered a word of deceit or treachery, he was given the grave of the wicked. He was given the grief of sinners. And with this perfect offering of his divine soul and holy humanity, he filled the pit of our guilt with the glory of his innocence, the will of Almighty God prospering in his hands and feet and side in the most marvelous and indescribably unexpected and undesired of ways.

All we, like wandering and blind sheep, have and ever are constantly going astray, each turning to our own way, to our own thoughts, each living our lives however we in our greed and passion for pleasure best see fit, but the LORD God has not laid these iniquities upon us. No. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

There. At the cross. In the body of Jesus. The image of God. The image of love. The image of life. The crucifix. The meaning of it all. No beauty we could desire. Even so, the forgiveness God desired for us.



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Weekly Devotion for March 15-21, 2015

LIFE



The theme of this week's devotions is life. The week begins with our physical life, which is supported by the daily bread which God so graciously gives. But the life of a man born of woman is hard and short due to sin. We were born in bondage to sin and to the law. We cannot even look God, the Life of all the living, in the face. But Christ Jesus has come to give us His life. Through Christ's promises, we now live the life of promise, the life of faith. We know that even when we die there will be renewal and relief. In Christ, we will one day see God face to face. May God bless our physical life and the Life which we receive through Christ our Lord.

5 PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK **Isaiah 66:10-11; Psalm 122:1-2, 6, 8**

Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be | glad with her,*
all you who | love her;
that you may feed and be | satisfied*
with the consolation of her | bosom.
I was glad when they | said to me,*
“Let us go into the house | of the Lord.”
Our feet have been | standing*
within your gates, O Je- | rusalem!
Pray for the peace of Je- | rusalem:*
“May they prosper who | love you.”
For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will | now say,*
“Peace be with- | in you.”

6 SAY TOGETHER THE VERSE OF THE WEEK **Psalm 16:11**

You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

7 READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION (OTHER SIDE OF THE PAGE)

8 PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE WEEK

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we implore You that we, who do worthily deserve to be punished for our evil deeds, may mercifully be relieved by the comfort of Your grace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

9 PRAYER FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

10 SING OR SAY THE HYMN OF THE WEEK **Jesus, Priceless Treasure**

TLH 347, LSB 743
Johann Franck



1. Jesus, priceless Treasure,
Fount of purest pleasure,
Truest Friend to me.
Ah, how long in anguish
Shall my spirit languish,
Yearning, Lord, for Thee?
Thou art mine, O Lamb divine!
I will suffer naught to hide Thee,
Naught I ask beside Thee.

2. In Thine arms I rest me;
Foes who would molest me
Cannot reach me here.
Though the earth be shaking,
Every heart be quaking,
Jesus calms my fear.
Lightnings flash And thunders crash;
Yet, though sin and hell assail me,
Jesus will not fail me.