PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK Psalm 97:6,9, 1, 10-12
The heavens declare His righteousness,* and all the peoples see His glory.
For You, Lord, are most high above all the earth:* You are exalted far above all gods
The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice:* let the multitude of isles be glad!
He preserves the souls of His saints:* He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.
Light is sown for the righteous,* and gladness for the upright right in heart.
Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous,* And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

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

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.

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.

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 Devotions + the week of January 23-29, 2022

THEME OF THE WEEK: God Manifested in the Power of Jesus to Heal
Advent anticipated the coming of Christ (“Oh, come . . . Emmanuel”). Christmas proclaimed His arrival in the flesh (“Joy to the world, the Lord has come”). Epiphany (literally ‘manifestation’) now proclaims the good news that “God was made manifest [‘epiphanied’] among us” (Verse of the Week). This week we behold God as He is manifested in Christ through two miraculous healings (Sunday), two psalms on the life of faith (Monday and Saturday), the conversion of St. Paul (Tuesday), the restoration of Jerusalem (Wednesday), worthy preaching by unworthy servants (Thursday), and the great “hall of faith” from Hebrews 11 (Friday).

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 8:1-3 ‘Manifest in making whole / palsied limbs and fainting soul’ (TLH 134:3)
See the liturgical shape of both of these healings! As an introit or entrance, the leper and the centurion approached Jesus in penitent faith, lest they presume upon God’s grace. For their Kyrie, they prayed out of their need to Christ, who is merciful incarnate, as all the baptized place their trust in God’s Divine clemency. As their Gloria, the leper and the centurion worshiped God, who manifested His healing power to palsied limbs and fainting soul. As our Collect, then, let all penitent sinners petition God for His abiding help in Christ alone: Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to help and defend us (TLH p. 59). Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 15 Who Shall Dwell on Your Holy Hill?
David prayed this Psalm as the ultimate journeyman, who lived in tents and sojourned over hills. Christ prayed this Psalm “as a high priest of the good things that have come...through the greater and more perfect tent” (Heb. 9:11), having secured our eternal redemption with His own blood. And we, who are in Christ, pray this Psalm knowing that “if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1). Glory to You, O Father, for You have given us the tabernacle of Your Son’s flesh; and to You, O Son, in whom we abide by faith; and to You, O Holy Ghost, by whom we live without spot or blemish: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

See how the last in this life are first in God’s kingdom, while those who are mighty in this life are cast down from their self-made thrones! The disciples were a rag-tag group of fishermen, tax collectors, and outcasts, but they will sit on twelve thrones as sort of a “jury of peers” in the final judgment. St. Paul was an independent tent maker with his own followers and the prestige of Roman citizens, until God regenerated him by water and the word (Acts 9:1-22) and began to seek eternal treasures. And you, even if you are last in this life, have the hundredfold blessings of His kingdom in His word and sacraments. O Lord, for Paul’s conversion, We bless Your name today: Come shine within our darkness, And guide us on our way (LSB 517.12). Amen.

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SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 33:6-9 The Lord Shall Restore Judah and Jerusalem
St. Augustine, after the fall of Rome in the early fifth century, wrote The City of God to contrast the desolation of the earthly city of Rome with the everlasting city of God, the new Jerusalem. Likewise, God promised through Jeremiah a restored Jerusalem, but even this earthly kingdom, apart from Christ as its true Temple, was “in slavery with her children” (Gal. 4:25). St. Paul continues: “But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother” (Gal. 4:26). So you have a baptismal diploma of permanent citizenship in this heavenly city, with all the rights, honors, and sacramental privileges thereto appertaining. Savior, since of Zion’s city / I through grace a member am, Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in Your name. (LSB 648.4). Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 17:5-10 Unworthy Servants, Worthy Preaching
In his book, The Church, Lutheran theologian Bo Giertz says that some pastors are work horses, who try to do everything and effectively do nothing. Others are racehorses, who are at once everywhere and nowhere. Some are merry-go-round horses, who serve as entertainment directors. (Let us add the more recent “executive pastors,” who are too alof to visit their shut-ins!) But in the spirit of Luke 17, Giertz says some pastors are simple oxen from the country (Is. 1:3), who are content to say, “We are unworthy servants,” for they have only done their duty, that you may hear the preached word of the cross. To send faithful laborers into Your harvest; and to accompany Your Word with Your grace and Spirit: We implore You to hear us, good Lord. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11:1-16 The Hall of Faith
What an honor to be enshrined in any earthly hall of fame, but how much greater to be included in the “hall of faith” in Hebrews 11! By faith Abel, Noah, Abraham, and a host of others lived by “the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). These luminaries of the Christian faith are precursors to the faithful Son of Israel, “Jesus, the founder and perfector of our faith, who...endured the cross...and is seated at the right hand of God” (Heb. 12:2). And now, through Holy Baptism, your name is permanently included in the hall of faith. Lord, give us faith to walk where You are sending, On paths unmarked, eyes blind as to their ending; Not knowing where we go, but that You lead us—With grace precede us (LSB 667.5). Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 33 The Steadfast Love of the Lord
Psalm 33 is foundational to Luther’s explanation to the first commandment, for here we pray that all nations would fear Him (v. 8), that His people would love Him (v. 18), and that you would trust in Him and wait upon Him, for He alone is your help and your shield (v. 20). Fearing, loving and trusting in Him above all things, let us conclude the week with a hymn stanza from Albrecht, Duke of Prussia, who was longsuffering and faithful in his support of the Reformation: When life’s brief course on earth is run / And I this world am leaving, Grant me to say, “Your will be done,” Your faithful Word believing. My dearest Friend, I now commend / My soul into Your keeping. From sin and hell, And death as well, By You the vict’ry reaping (LSB 758.4). Amen.