**PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK**  Psalm 28:8-9, 1-2, 7

The Lord is their strength,* and He is the saving refuge of His anointed. Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance:* shepherd them also, and bear them up for ever. To You I will cry, O Lord my Rock:* do not be silent to me, lest, if You are silent to me,* I become like those who go down to the pit. Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You,* when I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary. The Lord is my strength and my shield:* my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.

**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.
**Theme of the Week:** The Righteousness Born of Baptismal Grace

Life is a constant juggling act between sin and forgiveness, Law and Gospel, good works and gracious mercy. If you mingle any of these together then you don't come out with either of them, but something completely different. So let's get this straight. If we are talking about your salvation, then the only things that get to enter into the conversation are the things of life, forgiveness, Gospel, and gracious mercy. Only these things from the cross of Christ can provide for your eternal life. But if we are talking about your neighbor, then yes, let's talk about the Law for his benefit and your good works for his welfare. But we dare not mingle the two or else our good works won't be for our neighbor and they certainly won't grant us eternal life.

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:20-26—Exceeding The Righteousness Of The Pharisees

Your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees. That is a very high wall to scale, for the Pharisees were pretty darn righteous. The only problem is that “pretty darn righteous” isn’t righteous enough. One must have the righteousness of God and that can only be conferred upon us by Christ Himself. He is the one Who will fulfill the Law, not leaving one iota to pass away. It is then, once Christ’s righteousness is our own, that we can look to the needs of others, put away anger and malice, and love our neighbor as our self. Of course, we will struggle. But the righteousness of Christ is still ours and His forgiveness is still present, ready to forgive us when we sin and want to do better. Lord Jesus, grant us Your righteousness. Amen.

**Scripture:** Psalm 19:41-48—The Commandments Which We Love

Finding delight in the commandments of our Lord is an abject impossibility for the sinner that rages within. The sinner within wants nothing to do with God’s commandments and nothing to do with God Himself. This is the constant struggle that we wage with the Old Adam. He will constantly pull us back into sin’s old ways. That is why this delighting in the things of God must come from outside of us. And so in this psalm we pray for salvation from God according to His promise. This promise and salvation produces in us trust in His Word and delight in His commandments. In that way, we can stand in His Word, even as our enemies assault us. See, even this is a gift. O Lord, let Your steadfast love and salvation come to me. Amen.

**Scripture:** Romans 6:3-11—Dead To Sin And Alive To God In Christ Jesus

Baptism does something. It is not just a declaration of our decision for Christ, but spiritual burial and resurrection into the death and life of Jesus. So that His death is now ours, meaning that the victory over sin that He has won has been given to us. And His resurrection is ours as well. And this is not just some future event, but it is a newness of life that is ours this very day. The New Adam has been born within us through the holy waters of baptism so that we can be dead to sin. Sin now has no power or dominion over us. Yes, we will still be tempted. Yes, we will often times succumb to it. But sin’s promise of eternal death has been undone because we are forgiven for the sake of Christ. Jesus, thank You for my baptism into You. Amen.

**Scripture:** Matthew 20:20-28—First and Last...

To be numbered with Christ is to receive the cross. To be numbered with Christ means to be a slave to and for others. You want to be great? Then serve your neighbor! Become lowly for them like your Savior became lowly for you. For greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. Christ has done this for you, and you are called to do this for one another. His life of service is for your salvation. Your life of service is for the good, benefit, and welfare of your neighbor. Don’t seek the glories of heaven apart from the cross, for you will never see them. The cross is the only thing that brings salvation: Jesus’ cross for you. Only by humility under the cross can you serve your neighbor. Jesus, make me great by making me least. Amen.