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:* shepherding 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 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.

PRAY THE MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER
Morning. 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 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 kept me this night from all harm and danger: and I pray that You would keep me this night 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.
THEME OF THE WEEK: The Righteousness Born of Baptismal Grace

Entering the kingdom of heaven demands a righteousness greater than that of the Pharisees. God bestows this impossible righteousness earned by Christ on you through baptism: it is a gift of grace, not by works, lest you boast. As a result of that righteousness, your new man delights in the law and commandments of God, for you have died to sin with Christ. Your new, spiritually resurrected man bears the image of the perfect man described by the Ten Commandments, a feat that is only possible with God. And now, as the workmanship of God in Christ, your heart is no longer a place of stone, but a pool of water welling up to eternal life.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:20-26 Righteousness Exceeding that of the Pharisees

Unless we have righteousness greater than that of the Pharisees, we will never enter the kingdom of heaven. What does that kind of righteousness man look like? He never becomes angry or upset with his brother. And if he did, that kind of righteous man would immediately seek reconciliation. You will never attain to such righteousness on your own. Your sinful flesh likes anger too much—even claims that it’s righteous anger. Your sinful flesh enjoys stewing in that anger. Jesus, however, gives you that righteousness within your baptism. In His own baptism, He washed His righteousness into the water that it might be washed onto you. Heavenly Father, thank You for bestowing Your Son’s perfect righteousness on me in Holy Baptism. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 119:41-48 Righteousness Delights in God’s Law

It’s quite a struggle sometimes to pray these Psalms. Your sinful flesh does not delight in the commandments of God. Your flesh has not always sought the precepts of God. You do not keep God’s Law continually. So how dare you pray such a thing? Because Christ bestowed His righteousness upon you. The new man delights in the Law of God and His commandments. Your new man, a gift given to you in baptism, delights to lift up holy hands and meditate on the statutes of God. You can pray these Psalms because you in fact do delight in God’s commands as Christ delighted in them, for His delight in God’s Law is yours. Forgiving Father, keep us mindful of Your commands and give us delight in Your laws. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 6:3-11 United to Christ’s Death and Resurrection

St. Paul declares you to be dead to sin. By virtue of your baptism, you have died to sin. You might wonder how this can be given your ongoing struggle with sin. In one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith, you are at the same time dead to your sin and still struggle with your sinful flesh. While this paradox shall persist until the day when death closes your eyes, death’s day is done. For Christ united you to His death in the waters of holy baptism. There, in those waters, you have already died. You cannot die again: death no longer has dominion over you. Almighty God, we praise You for uniting us to the death and resurrection of Christ: comfort us in the day when death draws near in the knowledge of our ongoing life with and through Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:4-10 Walking as the Workmanship of God in Christ

God created you anew, in Christ Jesus, to do good works. There’s no way around it. As the Lutheran Confessions state, it is necessary to do good works, just not for salvation. Christ saved you by grace. He granted you His own righteousness in the waters of holy baptism. He created you to do His works: they do not earn you righteousness. Rather, walking in these righteous acts is walking out the righteousness God has given to you. It is who you are: it is what you do as his child. You were once dead in sin: now you are alive in Christ Jesus, to be seated with Him eternally. Guiding Father, You have made us anew to walk as Your children: guide us ever onto the narrow path leading to eternal life. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 114 From Stone to Water

As the Israelites left Egypt, God worked wonders before them. They crossed the Red Sea and the seas “fled” from their presence. The mountains and hills skipped like rams and lambs as His words echoed forth from his presence. And in that place of desolation and desert, He made water flow forth from the rock and turned a piece of flint into a pool. God continues working in the same way, even today. For your heart was once a stony wasteland, but through your union with Christ, it has become a well of life-giving water, welling up to eternal life. We need not fear and tremble any longer, for we are His dominion and sanctuary. Lord of all power and might, who governs and directs all things, take up residence in me through Your Word and Sacrament. Amen.