PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK Psalm 27:1-2, 3-5
The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*

The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked came against me,*
my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.
Though an army may encamp against me,*
my heart shall not fear;
though war should rise against me,*
in this I will be confident.

One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek:*
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
for in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion:*
he shall set me high up on a rock.

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

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.

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.
These words by Jesus are often abused and misused in our day. Too easily we see these words as license to do what we want and then reject anyone who dares to correct us. Of course, we should know that we are misquoting Jesus to ourselves. Do you feel very perfect? As we see our own pain and we see the ways that we have failed to live up to God’s standards, we realize that we are not perfect at all. And yet, Jesus tells us here to be perfect as His Father is perfect. What an impossible command! But we need to hear this because we see how much more God has done for us that we might do for Him or anyone else either. We are good to those who can be or are good to us back. But not our Lord. No, our Lord Jesus suffers and dies for sinners like us. He makes us perfect by His blood. Jesus Christ makes us perfect so that we can indeed love our neighbors in deed and in truth. O Lord, thank You for Your many blessings to me and for making me Righteous in You. Bless me that I may share Your blessings with others. Amen.

This passage is challenging. Does God require us to do these things before He blesses us? Now, I know that for the properly catechized Lutheran, our knee-jerk reaction is to say, “Of course God’s blessings aren’t dependent upon us!” And you’d be correct, but read the text again. After we do the things listed in the first verses, then does God give His blessings. Understand that this is not talking about our salvation. It is talking about us living out the faith that we have been given. And when we are faithful, when we are doing what our Lord calls us to do, there are blessings from our master. It is good for us to live the faith and to serve our neighbor. Our Lord blesses such action by His people. O Lord, please help me to see the value of my daily bread and help me to care for those whom You have given me to care for as well. Amen.

Do you hear the words of pain and sorrow coming from the Psalmist’s heart? We may feel the same in our own sufferings. We may feel like our souls cling to the dust or that we are melting because of our sorrow. In our despair, the devil tempts us to abandon the Lord. He has been mightily successful with this ploy. But rather than run from God in time of trouble, the Psalmist runs toward God. The Psalmist runs toward the goodness of God’s mercies and seeks to abide by the Law. This is the model of faithfulness for us as well. We can hurt, but in our hurt, Christ gives us life according to His Word. O Lord, You know my pains and my hurts. Please hold me steadfast in Your truth and comfort me with Your grace. Amen.

The beauty of this text is that we are reminded that we are not alone in our suffering. The whole of creation groans alongside us. No matter what may ail us or why we suffer, we are not alone. And though we endure such trials in this life, we know that there is more for us. We are able to face these sufferings with courage because Christ has promised that we will see the full redemption of not just our souls, but also our bodies in the new creation. We are reminded here that God’s blessings are more than just spiritual, but they are also physical blessings when our bodies are raised in incorruptibility. O Lord, please give me courage to face these days that I may be in the faith now and eternally at the promised resurrection of the dead. Amen.

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