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 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.

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 Discipleship Preserved and Perfected by the Spirit

The Bible is not about you. The Bible is about Jesus for you. Only in fixing our eyes on Jesus and His cross do we find any measure of hope in this life. In lifting our eyes to Christ, we are pulled away from ourselves, and can live free from trying to serve ourselves. Our Lord serves our needs, calls us righteous and perfect, and leaves us free to deal with our neighbor in the same love which saved us. As we struggle, fail, and sin, we keep our eyes on Jesus. He gives Himself to us in Word and Sacrament.

**SUN**

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 1:57-80 John the Baptist: A Portrait of An Evangelical Preacher

Zacharias, by the power of the Holy Spirit, prophesied concerning his son, John. John's importance wasn't that he would do miracles. John's importance wasn't that he would be a great king. No, John's importance lay in the fact that he was the forerunner to Our Lord Jesus. John's job was to give knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. What your pastor does is what John did. Your pastor teaches you. He gives you the knowledge of salvation. He gives you the forgiveness of sins in so many different ways on Sunday morning and during the week. Thanks be to God that He sends us preachers like John the Baptist!

**THU**

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 5:43-48 Be Perfect

Be perfect as God our heavenly Father is perfect. That’s impossible. How can we love those who hate us? How can we love those who have no loveable qualities? And yet, this is what the Law demands. The Law doesn’t equivocate. The Law doesn’t set conditions to its fulfillment. Do this, and you will live. But we cannot be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect apart from faith. Through faith, we receive Christ’s perfect righteousness. He loves the unlovable. And because He first loved us, we love our enemies and we pray for our persecutors. Lord Jesus, You showed Your love for us in Your sacrificial death upon the cross. Give us Your perfect righteousness. Amen.

**FRI**

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 16:13-20 Saints Peter and Paul

The Apostles were no strangers to sin, but by God’s grace, they learned to confess Christ, the Son of the Living God. By the Spirit’s inspiration, they wrote the Scriptures that we might hear the living voice of Jesus today. They are an example to us of the fearless confidence that is found only in Christ, the unsailable rock upon which the Church is founded. Merciful and eternal God, Your holy apostles Peter and Paul received grace and strength to lay down their lives for the sake of Your Son. Strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit that we may confess Your truth and at all times be ready to lay down our lives for Him who laid down His life for us. Amen.

**SAT**

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 92 The Difference between the Faithful and Faithless

This Psalm was used on the Sabbath. It is a response to the wonderful works of God. The Psalmist declares: “O Lord, how great are Your works!” And, we do! We thank Him for creation. We thank Him for our redemption through Jesus Christ. And we thank Him for our sanctification. These are God’s mighty works. The fool, who says there is no God, cannot understand these things. The wicked will be destroyed forever. But those who are righteous by faith shall endure and bear fruit even in old age. May God grant that we are planted in church, in our Lord's house, so that we might be watered with the living water of the Spirit. Heavenly Father, Your Works are great. Continue to work in us on Sunday morning and everyday. Amen.

**WED**

**SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 58:6-12 The Fruit of Repentance

The people of Isaiah's day thought that going through the motions of religious exercises was enough. But without repentance, sorrow over sin and faith in Christ, outward actions count for nothing. God through Isaiah points out what the fruits of repentance look like. These fruits are not in following the ceremonial law, at least in this section. On the contrary, the fruits of repentance look like the second table of the Law, loving your neighbor as yourself. Only the Holy Spirit can bring about true repentance, so that we can love and serve our neighbor as God commands in this chapter. The Spirit creates and gives undeserved rewards for such fruit. Lord Jesus, create in us true repentance so that we may love our neighbor as Isaiah illustrates. Amen.

**TUE**

**SCRIPTURE:** Romans 8:18-23 Preserved and Perfected

This world is hard for the children of God. There is pain and suffering, a consequence of the Fall. Even creation groans under the heavy hand of sin. Animals, who originally ate only vegetation, now slaughter one another. Death and corruption are so pervasive that many are led astray. They think that death is a necessary component to how the universe works, i.e. Evolution. But we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. On the last day, we shall be freed of the corruption caused by sin. In the meantime, we eagerly wait and hope. Lord Jesus, You have redeemed our bodies. Come quickly and free us from the bond of corruption. Amen.