PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK Psalm 74:1-2, 19, 20-23
Have respect to Your covenants, O Lord;* oh, do not let the oppressed turn ashamed!
Arise, O God, plead / Your own cause!* do not forget the voice of Your enemies.
O God, why have You cast us off for ever?* Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?
Remember Your congregation,* which You have chased of old, The tribe of Your inheritance, which You have redeemed—* this Mount Zion where / You have dwelt.
Do not forget the life of Your poor forever.* Let the poor and needy / praise Your 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 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.
Meanwhile, 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.

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.
**THEME OF THE WEEK:** The Sinners Whom Jesus Died For

We often want to make things all about us, half about us, or at least the slightest bit about us. If we do this with salvation, then we’ve fallen into what theologians call synergism (working alongside God for our salvation). The ultimate desire of the sinful flesh is to justify ourselves, and so we take the Law of God and use it unlawfully. We take the mysteries of the parables and turn them into moral platitudes. We take the work of Jesus and make it secondary to the work of our own hands. It’s a dangerous slope, and it is one that we all slide down multiple times a day. But Jesus does His Good Samaritan work of binding, healing, fulfilling, and forgiving. He never tires, no matter how many times we sin.

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 10:23-37—The Good Samaritan

I wish I could be the Good Samaritan, and I wish this parable was about me. But when taken in context, Jesus tells this parable to a lawyer desiring to justify himself. It can hardly be thought that Jesus would then tell him a parable so that he could justify himself. On his best day, this lawyer is the priest or the Levite who pass by the way. I quickly realize that I am not the Good Samaritan either. I also realize I am that dying man on the side of the road who needs someone to come and bind MY wounds and clean MY filth and carry ME to the end of my journey. It becomes so gloriously and wonderfully clear that Jesus is the Good Samaritan. Dear Jesus, be my Good Samaritan. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 119:97-104 (MEM)—Jesus Again

I’m not too sure I like reading this section of Psalm 119. The psalmist boils of some pretty amazing things: He loves the Lord’s Law and meditates on it day and night. He has more understanding of the things of God than anyone else. He holds back every evil, just so that he can keep God’s Word and precepts. How condemning a Psalm this is! This doesn’t describe me, not in the slightest. If I were to boast in such a way, I would be a hypocrite. We strive for this righteousness, but we never attain it. But just like our reading for yesterday, the true comfort in this text comes from the fact that the psalmist speaks about Jesus. Who else can speak these boastful claims without lying? It is Jesus, only Jesus! He has come to do what we were called to do, but never could accomplish. What joy! What an everlasting joy! Father in heaven, count me righteous for the sake of Christ. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Galatians 3:15-22—The Offspring is Jesus

Abraham was given the Promise long before the Law of Moses came about. The Promise was more than just “offspring”, plural, but it was “offspring”, singular. It was the promise of Jesus. Whatever Law there might be does not make the promise of Jesus and His salvation void. The Law is still good, of course, but in regard to salvation, it must be seen in its proper light. The Law was given because we were in sin and dead to it. The Law was given that we might know that we are dead in our sin and that the Law can never bring us salvation. We don’t look to the Law for salvation or for the assurance of salvation. That would be misusing it. Instead, we look to Jesus, always to Jesus. He is the promise of Abraham and we receive Him in the same way he did: in faith, not through works. God of salvation, may we correctly distinguish Law and Gospel. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Leviticus 18:1-5—Don’t Do Like the Unbelievers

Although Christ has come to fulfill the Law, He did not come to do away with it. This means that the Law of God, the good and holy Law of God, still stands before us. But, to be certain, it does not stand before us to justify us. It stands to first show us our grievous sinful flesh, to know that apart from Christ we would be exactly like the unbelievers, falling down before false gods. Since we have been brought to faith in Christ Jesus and our sins are forgiven free and clear and full, we have the beautiful light of the Law saying, “Of course you don’t do like the unbelievers. You are a baptized child of God.” It might be a little confusing, but it really comes down to this: The Law does not save. When this is known, only then can we begin to see the beauty of its rule for our lives.

Heavenly Father, my I believe in Christ for my salvation. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 18:20-28—Being Great

The ten are mad at the sons of Zebedee, not because James and John had dared to ask what they did, but because the rest of them hadn’t had the courage to ask this for themselves first. Jesus sees through it, sees through all our false hubris. We want glory, but the glory of Jesus is the cross. If we really comprehend that then we wouldn’t ask to be seated with Him. We like our glory better than God’s. Jesus replies, “the first is last and the last is first.” Once again, He is talking about Himself. He comes not to be served, but to serve. He is humbled to lift us up in the heavenly places through His work and His deeds and His righteousness. We will get what we ask for, but in a way that we had never dreamed. That’s Jesus for you. His cross does all things well. Jesus, may we receive the gifts of the kingdom for Your sake. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Timothy 1:5-17—The Law is Good if...

The Law is only good if one uses it lawfully, or in the way that it is intended by God. The Law is not to be used to gain salvation. It is not to be used to measure our “goodness” against yours. The Law is not to speak to those who have no sin in order that they might be justified in their own works. If the Law is used this way then it is not good. It must be seen and heard in the light of sin. We recognize that the Law was given before the Law of God, the good and holy Law of God, was laid before the sinner, not so that we might someday do better, but so that we might know for certain that we never will. The Law punishes us in the belly like a tormentor, it never walks alongside us as a friend. In this way, it is good. For it is only in this way that I might know that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of which I am the foremost. Christ Jesus, save a poor miserable sinner like me. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 9:9-13—Sinners and Tax Collectors

It is not the healthy who need a doctor. It is not the righteous who need a Savior. In our pride we run the risk of considering ourselves too good for Jesus. We don’t think we need saving. Better to know that we are the “chief of sinners.” Matthew did. Here again is a chief of sinners found by Jesus in the midst of their sin, saying, “Follow Me,” and Matthew does. What else could a convicted sinner do? Jesus goes and eats with more sinners and tax collectors, who couldn’t produce a single good work for their salvation. But Jesus dines with them nonetheless, just like He does with you and me. Jesus eats with sinners. He is a Savior and a physician. He can save, He can be saved, a physician for the sick, a life-bringer to the dead. This is the only sort of Jesus that you will ever get: one that dines with sinners, who dines with us. Be merciful to me, a poor sinful being. Amen.

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