Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for You:*
...
**THEME OF THE WEEK:** Singlehearted Love of God in Christ

I can't love God OR my neighbors. The sinner in me won't let me. I can only love God AND my neighbors. The saint in me won't allow for anything else. I can't be righteous and yet I am. I can't remain faithful and yet I do. I don't desire to serve my neighbor and yet I do. I can hardly convince myself to have a morning devotion and yet zeal for His Word consumes me! I am but a dried up fruitless stick and yet am a fruitful branch that can hardly bear anymore. This flesh/spirit coexistence is who I am. I thank the Lord for my saintly nature, which isn't mine, but Christ's. And I pray that my Old Adam might, by daily contrition, be put away. For this is the way of things on this side of heaven. May God be merciful to the sinner and uphold the saint.

**SCRIPTYRE:** Matthew 22:34-46—Loving the Law, Hating the Gospel

The Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus by using His own Law against Him. The Pharisees loved the Law, as does our sinful flesh, but for the wrong reason. We love the Law not because it is good and right and salutary, but because we think we can justify ourselves with it. If we do this we negate the Gospel. We have no need for Jesus. Yet the Law cannot save us. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of David, and He has already fulfilled the Law on our behalf. We don’t pit the Law against the Gospel. The Law is fulfilled in the Gospel, that is, the Law is fulfilled in Christ. Christ fulfills our righteousness with His very own. Which is the greatest Commandment? The one that Christ fulfilled for us! Lord, grant us a right understanding of both Law and Gospel. Amen.

**SCRIPTYRE:** Psalm 119:137-144—Your Commandments are My Delights

It is stunning how the Lord's Word is put before us as our delight. "Trouble and anguish have overtaken me. Yet Your commandments are my delight" (Ps 119:143). We might have trouble in this life, but the Lord gives us the treasure of His wisdom and His comfort in His Word. We delight in His Word because in His Word we hear that our Lord Jesus delights in us! All along our troubled way we have the treasure of the Lord's Word. Lord Jesus, teach us to delight in You and Your Words. Amen.

**SCRIPTYRE:** 1 Corinthians 1:4-9—The Grace of God in Christ

The people of Corinth are children of God. They have everything they need. Christ is their source of every blessing and He is their forgiveness, life, and salvation. Paul encourages and reminds them of this gift. Then, immediately after our text, Paul speaks about the divisions in the congregation. This should not be, but it is. There should not be sin within the Church, but there is. There should only be saints within the Church, but it is full of sinners. Do we wonder at this? It is who we are: justified and redeemed saints, and yet, in this fallen flesh, sinners too. There are Christians. We repent. We rejoice that Christ makes us one. He will sustain us to the very end, guiltless in the day of our Lord. Father, remain faithful to Your Church for the sake of Christ, that we may be holy in Your sight. Amen.

**SCRIPTYRE:** Deuteronomy 10:12-21—A Circumcised Heart

Moses reminds the Israelites who they are: If they are circumcised in the flesh then they are circumcised in the heart. A child of God is a child of God: not just outwardly, but inwardly. He is a new creation, he produces good fruit. He hears God's Word, he loves it all and receives it all: both the admonishment of the Law and the forgiveness of the Gospel. Paul talks about this very thing for you in Colossians 2. In your baptism you received the circumcision of Christ. Buried in His death and raised to new life in His resurrection. Baptism is the putting on of Christ. His righteousness covers you. His good fruit is produced in your life. And His love for you and your neighbor is in you. This is our joy and our gladness. Lord God, daily drown us in our baptism so that we might have the circumcised heart of Christ. Amen.

**SCRIPTYRE:** John 15:1-17—Greater Love

Jesus starts His teaching on vines and branches with words that sound a bit overwhelming: Bear much fruit! Yet before we can get our self-righteous gardening tools out of the shed He follows up with a perfect description of love. Nothing is greater than laying down one’s life. Is that an example, the top rung of the ladder to climb to? Or is that the pinnacle of His love for us? The answer to that is staring at you from the cross. It is His cross and resurrection that connects you to the Vine in the first place. So what else could a branch do except do the branchy things of producing fruit? And what else could the Vine do except continue on doing His Viney things of making you a branch and then producing His fruit through you? Remember, it’s not about the branch, its about the Vine. True Vine of heaven, produce in us branches You fruit for the good of our neighbors. Amen.

**SCRIPTYRE:** 1 John 3:1-8—For This Purpose

Sin is what separates us from the life of God and joins us to death and the devil. Jesus comes to undo this, to undo our death, to undo our bondage and set us free. Look at how John says it, "For this reason the Son of God was manifest, that He might destroy the works of the devil." The devil that gives you so much trouble, he is destroyed by Jesus. The sin that gives you so much trouble, it is forgiven by Jesus. The death that is staring you down, it is destroyed by Jesus. You are His, and life is yours. Lord Jesus, keep us in Your forgiveness and life. Amen.

**SCRIPTYRE:** Psalm 54—God is My Helper

David flees for his life from Saul and then is betrayed by the Ziphites. He is hiding in southern Judah and yet his whereabouts are made known. Saul seeks his life because God’s Word has consecrated David to be king. In the midst of trial, fear, and lament David calls out to God. He sees no way of escape aside from God’s almighty hand. The same is true for us. In times of suffering and torment we often are left in a state of “I believe! Help my unbelief!” We know God’s promises and yet are still overwhelmed by the trials of this life. In times such as these, may we cry out a Psalm of lament and pray for vindication. Let us hold God to His Word, for He has lied Himself to it. Then we sit in His promises knowing that He will never break them. Behold, God is my helper: the Lord is the upholder of my life. Amen.