**PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK**  
Psalm 86:1-3, 4, 6, 15-16

Bow down Your ear, O Lord, / hear me:*  
You are my God; save Your servant who / trusts in You!  
Be merciful to / me, O Lord,*  
for I cry to You / all day long.  
Rejoice the soul of Your / servant,*  
for to You, O Lord, I lift / up my soul.  
Give ear, O Lord, / to my prayer:*  
and attend to the voice of my suppli- / cations.  
You, O Lord, are a God full of com- / passion,*  
oh, turn to me, and have mercy up- / on me!  
Give Your strength to Your / servant,*  
and save the son of Your / maidservant.

**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.

**Say 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 forgive  
me all my sins where I have done  
wrong, and graciously keep me this  
night. For Thine is the kingdom and  
the power and the glory  
forever and ever. 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 Confidence in God Wrought by the Spirit

The year 2020 has destroyed man’s confidence in many things, a stark reminder amidst pandemic, social upheaval, and political controversy that confidence in the flesh leads to despair and destruction. But we, who leave all to follow Him (Matthew 8:9-13), will also have the gifts of this earth (Matthew 6:24-34), the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:25-6:10), and love for God and our neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). Christ is our one thing needful (Luke 10:38-42), Who is always with us in preaching and Baptism (Acts 8:26-39). We, who take refuge in Christ Jesus and who trust not in the flesh, will never be confounded (Psalm 34), for our confidence is in Him alone.

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 6:24-34 Contentment in Christ

Jesus instructs us not to be anxious about our daily needs. The word “anxious” in the original language of the New Testament is the same word for tombstone. Worry, which is idolatry, erects a tombstone in the human heart. Repent! But our confidence, wrought by the Spirit and anchored in the crucified and risen Christ, is in God alone. He created, redeemed, and sanctified us. Our heavenly Father cares for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. How much more will He give us, the crown of His creation, to wear the baptismal robe—Heavenly Father, thank You for daily and richly providing all that we need to support this body and life. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 9:9-13 Come, Follow Me

See how St. Matthew, having once been an IRS man of his day, was converted by the power of the Word to be one who gives, rather than takes. The thief (as tax collectors often were) became an Apostle, dispensing freely the mercy of God to all who believe. And as Jesus ate with the sinner Matthew and taught Him to desire mercy rather than sacrifice, so did St. Matthew, through his Gospel, hand down the Apostolic tradition of hearing the good news about Jesus and eating His Holy Supper. We, though terminally ill with sin, are blessed with the same blessings from the Great Physician: life, salvation, and resurrection from the dead. Lord Jesus, grant us to live in daily repentance that we may continue to rejoice in Your righteousness. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Galatians 5:25-6:10 Not of the Flesh, but of the Spirit

Here St. Paul contrasts the sinful flesh against the work of the Holy Spirit. The flesh pursues its own sinful desires and will never be satisfied, for we poor sinners will always lust after more power, money, pleasure, and other idols. This vanity will not be ended by satisfying it, but rather by crucifying it through repentance (the circumcision of the heart). The Spirit, by contrast, gives us genuine confidence in Christ and His atoning work. In Him alone are the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.), manifest in bearing one another’s burdens. It’s just what God’s children do. Lord Jesus, it is better to trust in You than to put confidence in men. Grant that our confidence may always be in You, that we may walk in daily repentance and faith. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 34 Every Day Will I Bless Thee

Martin Luther describes Psalm 34 as “the history of David as an example for all the righteous so we might learn from him that God never despises the cries of His saints.” As Christ’s own prayer through the mouth of His saints, this Psalm teaches us to fear God and to be on our guard against all manner of temptation, even as we take up our cross and suffer for the gospel. Here we also learn to bless the Lord at all times and to let His praise continually be in our mouths, for the Lord Jesus, grant us to live in daily repentance that we may continue to rejoice in Your righteousness. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Deuteronomy 6:4-7 One God and Father of All

In the parable of Nathan the Wise, a Medieval lord leaves three rings of sonship: one real, two replicas -- each of his three sons, but takes to his grave the identity of his one true heir. This is how rational man views the three religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) that believe there is but one God. How do we know that the Shema (“Hear, [O Israel!” text in Deuteronomy is uniquely Christian Scripture? Islam is fatherless. Modern Judaism is sonless. Christianity, by contrast, has the Father and the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He did all for us and for our salvation, that we might love Him with our heart, soul, and mind. Lord God, You are the only true God. Grant that we and our children may hold fast to You in the quiet confidence of faith. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 10:38-42 One Thing Needful

Here are three icons of daily life in Christ. Martha teaches us that we should not be so distracted by “all created things” (TLH 366.2) that we lose track of the one thing needful. Mary is an icon of penitent faith, “as intent each word [of Jesus] she noted, At her Savior’s feet reclined” (TLH 366.3). But let us not stop at trying to “be like Mary,” for the heart of this story is Christ, the icon of the Father: “Wisdom’s highest, noblest treasure, Jesus, lies concealed in Thee” (TLH 366.5). “Thy death on the cross hath Death wholly defeated / And thereby my righteousness fully completed” (TLH 366.6). Heavenly Father, forgive us for putting our false gods ahead of Your Word. Grant that we may count all but loss for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 8:26-39 The Washing of Regeneration

Behold, the model of New Testament ministry to the unbaptized, and how different it is from modern evangelical crusades! Here is law, gospel, and baptism. The law of God shows us how we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and must repent or die. The gospel proclaims the good news that Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53 and all that was written “Deep in the prophet’s sacred page [and] Grand in the poets’ winged word” (TLH 132.2). And such preaching leads immediately to baptism, a washing of regeneration (literally “genesis again”) for all nations. Lord of the Harvest, thank You for bringing us to the font. Grant that the preached Word of the cross may bring many more to baptism, to die to sin and to live in Christ. Amen.

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