

Hear the Voice



Lent Devotions for 2023
By Rev. Michael Boyer

Blessings to you as you hear the Voice of Jesus this Lent season. He comes speaking a message of law and Gospel to sinners like us. As we hear Him we repent and receive the forgiveness won by Him on the tree.

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Ash Wednesday

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1.1

John, in his Gospel, is concerned that you should hear the Word of God. This Word created the world, heals many, grants faith to sinners, forgives sins, and even raises the dead. For John this Word is life itself. To have this Word is to have life, to be without this Word is to be without life.

John begins at the beginning. There was nothing but God and then God spoke. The very Word of God created. The Father willed creation to happen and the Son made it so. All things were made through Him, the Son.

But this was not enough. Soon enough mankind plunged all creation into sin. Darkness seemed to overcome God's wonderful creation, thus the Word had to take on flesh and speak to cleanse the world from sin. This Word is the glory of the Father. This Word is Jesus.

The one who made the cosmos comes to His fallen creation to speak it, speak us, clean. God took on flesh and dwelt among us. Could this be the glory of God? Indeed! The glory of God is found in the humiliation of the Son. Jesus goes to the tree to die in your place, that you would be forgiven through His Word.

And so you are! You are forgiven by the Word of God. That Word comes to you through your Baptism into Him. Word and water are lavished on you and you are declared forgiven. The Word rings in your ears telling all what Jesus has done for you, you hear His mercy. The Supper comes to your lips and you partake of the Word, Jesus. In these ways you are declared forgiven through the Word of God.

During Lent we will focus on John's emphasis of the Word and its importance in our lives. May you be blessed to hear and receive Jesus, the Word of God.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have sent sinners Your Word, even Jesus Christ, grant me to rejoice to receive Him that I would be declared forgiven. In His Name. Amen.

Thursday

He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." John 1.23

A voice cries in the wilderness. How odd! Who would be out there? The voice prepares the way for the Lord. How unusual, a voice, just a voice, preparing the way for God? Shouldn't God have chosen some other way? Maybe, at least, a messenger not dressed like John?

A voice cries in the wilderness. It cries out about sin telling sinners to repent. It calls sinners out to be baptized in the Jordan river. It brings sinners out to be exiled in the wilderness. They travel back through the Jordan river, as their forefathers did, into the Promised Land.

A voice cries in the wilderness. But this should not be that unusual to the Israelites. How many other voices had cried out? How many other prophets had spoken to warn sinners of sin and turn them to the gracious action of God? How many other prophets had told of the coming of the Christ? This message was not new.

Voices still cry out. The law is still proclaimed. The law shows the character of God, God is holy. The law demands that you be holy also, but you are sinful. You do not measure up to the law's strict demands. The law is not fooled by your piety or vain, good works. It demands holiness in all of your thoughts, heart, and actions. The law accuses you of your sins. It points them out and accuses you. You are the guilty one.

A voice cries out. Let it be yours as you repent of your sins. What else can you do? God knows them all. Repent, turn from sin. Prepare the way of the Lord! Jesus comes with grace and mercy for sinners. For you He came and for you He died. He takes all your sins and dies in your place. The punishment meant for you was placed on Him. He speaks you clean. You are forgiven of your sins. You are granted the Promised Land of heaven as you are washed through Baptism.

Prayer: Father, I thank you that John cried out to prepare the way before the Christ. Grant me to listen to Your law, repent of my sin, and be forgiven through Jesus. Grant me to trust Him entirely for my salvation. In His Name. Amen.

Friday

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1.29

This man, Jesus, was the Lamb of God. There were many lambs slain through the years at the tabernacle and temple. They were year old lambs without blemish sacrifice during the Passover. As God passed over He spared the homes with blood on the doorposts. The lamb died, the people went free.

Year after year the people celebrated the Passover, remembering what God had done for them. Lambs died as the people remembered how God had rescued them from the Egyptians and worked plagues on the gods of Egypt. God did it all for His people. Out of death they received life and from slavery they were set free.

When John calls Jesus the Lamb of God, it is this Passover history that John thinks on. The continual sacrifices of the lambs didn't save the people, God did. Even the continual sacrifices of animals in the Temple didn't forgive the sins of sinners. They pointed toward a one-time sacrifice which would save sinners from sin, devil, and even death.

The one John points to is that one-time sacrifice. Jesus goes as a lamb to the slaughter. On Him were put the sins of sinners. The angel of death struck Him down that sinners would live and be led out to the Promised Land. His blood is painted on you through your Baptism into Him. Death passes you over and you are given life. All of your enemies lie defeated before you. The victory is yours through the Lamb who has been slain.

John's voice directs you to the Lamb. But not just his voice. All of Scripture points us to the Lamb of God. The Old Testament points to the One who would come to defeat sin. Every account is about Jesus coming for you. The New Testament points to the Lamb of God who traveled to the tree for you. It's all about Him, your Lamb of God.

Prayer: Father, I thank You that You have sent Your Son to die in my place. Cover me with the death that Jesus died and forgive my sins. Grant me to live in the death that Jesus died. In His Name. Amen.

Saturday

He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). John 1.41

John the Baptizer spoke of Jesus, and preached "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Andrew overheard and believed John. Andrew wanted to hear more about this Lamb of God so he followed Jesus to where He was staying and spent the day with Him. Andrew knew that this man was the Messiah.

The Messiah was promised to come from God to overturn the sins of sinners and reverse the curse placed on Adam and Eve in the garden. The Messiah would come as a descendant of David, to recreate creation. Generation after generation had waited for this one and now Andrew believes that he has found the Messiah.

The first thing Andrew does is to tell his brother, Simon. He wanted Simon to know the one who was the Messiah also. Would Simon believe Andrew or laugh at him? Didn't seem to matter to Andrew if Simon believed him or not, he knew this was Jesus, the Messiah.

But Andrew didn't just tell his brother about Jesus, he brought Simon to Jesus. Andrew wanted Simon to hear right from Jesus. Isn't that the way it still works? One hears about Jesus and receives Jesus and then desires to tell their family or friends. But not just tell them, but bring them to Jesus.

Where then is Jesus found? During the time of His earthly ministry Jesus was walking around on earth, but after Ascension Day that changed. Jesus dwells in a better way with the church - through Word and Sacrament. Where the Word is proclaimed, Baptism is performed in His name, and the Supper received there is Jesus for you. But not just for you, for all! That was why Andrew was so anxious to bring Simon to Jesus. That is why so many are anxious to bring family and friends to the Divine service even today - that we would all receive Jesus together.

Prayer: Father, I give You thanks that You have found me amid my sins and covered me with the death that Jesus died for me. Give me zeal and love that I would tell others of Jesus and invite them to Him. In His Name. Amen.

Sunday

Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." John 1.48

How could the Word do such a thing as this? Nathaniel knew, he knew that Jesus was not the Messiah because after all, what good can come from Nazareth? What could make Nathaniel believe in Jesus? Just the words of Jesus, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." That was it, Nathaniel believed. "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

The Word did it. Zechariah is very concerned about the coming Messiah in his book. It seems that this was what Nathaniel was reading, the book of Zechariah. Zechariah speaks of a Branch that will come. This branch will remove the sin of the land in a single day! "In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree (Zechariah 3.10)."

Nathaniel must have been thinking about that servant Branch and the glorious day of the Lord when Jesus spoke those words to him. Nathaniel understood that Jesus didn't just see him under the fig tree, but also realized that Jesus knew what he was reading and that Jesus was the fulfillment of what he had been reading in Zechariah.

The Word of God testifies to the person and work of Jesus. He is the Messiah, the one who comes to recreate creation through His death. He is the one who comes to forgive your sins and grant you new life. He comes to you through His Word and Sacraments that you, along with Nathaniel, would proclaim Him the Son of God and King of Israel.

It is the Word of God which creates and sustains faith in Jesus. That Word worked on Nathaniel and upon you also. The faith you have springs from the Word. Thus, continue to read and study all that Jesus has done for you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have sent Your Son to die on the tree and save sinners from their sins. I thank You that You have given me Your Word that I would receive faith in Jesus and trust in Him for my salvation. In His Name. Amen.

Monday

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. John 2.7

At the command of Jesus they filled the jars. Could the servants have expected what was about to happen? They were just following the command of Mary who had told them to do whatever Jesus told them. These servants were obedient, doing as was directed of them.

Jesus was less obedient. Mary knew that the wedding feast was ruined. The guests had drunk all the wine! Now there was none! Who would be so rude and unthoughtful to the bride and groom? When Mary tells the servants to do whatever Jesus directs them, she is not expecting Jesus to make more wine.

Mary expects that Jesus will have the servants throw out those who have had too much to drink. Remove the people who have ruined the party! But Jesus does not do that. Instead Jesus has the servants fill the jars with water and turns the water to wine. Jesus provides more wine for those who had so much already!

So it is with Jesus. His words are unexpected grace and mercy. When one would expect only law from Jesus one receives mercy. Knowing the law of God we quickly realize our sinful condition. We cannot live up to His law and should be condemned. It would only be right! But amid the law's accusation Jesus steps in and takes our place. Jesus does the unexpected and travels on to the tree for you. He lays down His life for you. He experiences the punishment of your sins that you would not.

Where Jesus is there is the outpouring of creation beyond our expectations. Those at the party did not deserve more wine nor do we deserve the mercy of God. Yet, Jesus gives. He gives you grace upon grace. He washes you clean through Baptism. He brings that grace to you daily through His Word. He offers Himself to you through the Supper. We live by this great unexpected mercy!

Prayer: Father, You have sent Your Son to seek and save us amid our sins. While we could do nothing good before You, Jesus died in our place. Bring Jesus to me again and forgive me my sins that I would give thanks to You for Your great mercy and love. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
John 2.19

Do the words of Jesus make any sense? He had just cleansed the Temple, driving out the money-changers with a whip of cords. Now Jesus talks about destroying the Temple and rebuilding it in three days? Who could manage that?

Solomon had built the first Temple. He had all the building materials collected by David, his father. David had conquered kingdoms to get the precious materials needed for the Temple's construction. Solomon had the most skilled workmen in Israel build the Temple and he spared no expense.

But that Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. It was rebuilt during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The people toiled to rebuild the Temple, but in the end its glory was not that of the first Temple. Herod had expanded this second Temple so that the Temple area was nearly doubled in size.

Could one person really rebuild this massive structure? The Temple was where God met His people with grace and mercy. Sacrifices were presented before God and sins were passed over. The commandments of God were followed as the people worshiped as God directed.

But this was not enough. There was the promise that God would overcome sin. This was not accomplished through the sacrificial system nor observing the Passover. Rather, God would dwell in flesh with man to accomplish this.

God became flesh and dwelt among men. Here was the true Temple! This one was and is Jesus. He is the place where God meets man in gracious action. Jesus speaks of tearing Himself down on the tree. There, sins are passed over and put on Jesus. He is the true sacrifice for sinners as He offers right worship to the Father. Through His

death the world is cleansed of sin and through His resurrection on the third day sinners are granted hope of eternal life.

Prayer: Father, Your Son is the true Temple who has offered Himself for me on the tree. Grant me to live in the mercy Jesus has given me that I would live forever in Him. In His Name. Amen.

Wednesday

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3.3

The words of Jesus confuse Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus should be able to understand, but this talk of being born again makes no sense to him. Nicodemus must have understood what the kingdom of God was. The Jews were seeking that kingdom, that freedom from Rome, for generations. They were looking for one like David to come and save them from foreign occupation. But this talk of being born again, what did that mean?

For Jesus, the kingdom of God is not an earthly nation nor is it freedom from earthly powers. This kingdom of God is Jesus. He is the King and where the King is there is the kingdom. To understand that Jesus is the King and the kingdom, one must be born again.

Physical birth is not enough for all mankind is born sinful. Sinners inherit the sin of their parents and this original sin produces evil in their lives. One must be born again. This birth is of the Spirit. Such a birth is a putting on of the King, Jesus.

The birth that Jesus speaks of is Baptism. This birth comes by water and Spirit. Into the Word of the King and into the death of the King is one Baptized. Through Baptism faith is given to the sinner that he or she would understand that Jesus is the King. Baptism gives more than one can understand, it also gives concrete gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

This is what the Old Testament people had been waiting for! The King, God incarnate, had come to rescue them from their sins. This one was standing right before Nicodemus and he could not recognize it. Nicodemus was blinded by sin. But Jesus is merciful. He comes to sinners to forgive and save!

The Spirit goes where He wishes. He desires to come to you through Word and Sacrament. Receive Him who brings the King and the death the King died. Receive Jesus.

Prayer: Father, Your Son is the King and through His death He establishes an eternal kingdom. Breathe the breath of life upon me and give me Your life giving Spirit. Forgive my sins that I would be eternally in Your Kingdom. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up. John 3.14

Jesus speaks of being lifted up. Here is the source of hope and comfort for sinners! This was wonderfully foreshadowed in the Old Testament, as Jesus says. Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.

Moses lifted up the serpent because of the rebellion of the people. The people had spoken out against God and Moses. They despised God's leadership thinking that they would be better off without God in Egypt. They hated the food God provided and claimed that there was no water. They did not trust God.

God sent fiery serpents to bite the people. These serpents became to the sinners - the Law, showing them their sins. The people soon repented and begged Moses to do something. The bronze serpent was made at the direction of God so that whoever was bit by a fiery serpent could look at the bronze snake on the pole and live.

The Israelites had to trust God that looking at the bronze serpent would save them. They learned to trust God amid certain death. Even still, the words of Christ demand our trust. He would be lifted up. Jesus would travel to the cross for the sins of sinners. The only way to eternal life is to look to Jesus in faith and trust.

Moses lifted up the serpent that sinners would look and live. Jesus was lifted up so that sinners would receive forgiveness and live eternally. Trust the sacrifice that Jesus made for you. He has died for all your sins and grants you forgiveness freely. Through Word and Sacrament you are joined to the death that Jesus died and through Him you are forgiven. Do not live in doubt, but trust.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have given Your Son to a sinner like me. Amid my sins grant me to trust all that Jesus has done for me upon the tree. Bring His death to me and forgive all my sins. Grant me joy knowing all Jesus has done for me. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4.13-14

What words from Jesus to this woman of Samaria! Jesus has water that makes one never thirsty again! Could this woman receive this water and never need to draw water from the well again? Like Nicodemus, this woman is not really sure what Jesus is talking about.

The promise to Nicodemus was that he had to be born again. That is, he had to be baptized and receive the Spirit. Through Baptism one receives the benefits of what Jesus did on the cross - forgiveness, life, and salvation. One enters a state of grace, living in the forgiveness of sins won by Jesus.

This is the same promise given to this woman. Jesus is not talking about water from a well making one never thirsty and welling up to eternal life, but Baptism. Being Baptized one has the forgiveness of all his or her sins. They are all forgiven, there is nothing more that person needs - they are never thirsty again.

Through Nicodemus and this woman at the well Jesus is preparing the church to receive the gifts that He would give. Many had received the baptism of John, but Jesus would give a better Baptism after His resurrection.

This gift of Baptism is a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Baptism joins the sinner to Jesus' death. Through His death He took the sins of sinners upon Himself and died in their place. He died in your place. You need not wonder about your salvation. Your Baptism gives you confidence that you have been joined to Jesus and are saved.

You live in the grace of your Baptism each day. Every time forgiveness comes to you it flows from the Baptism you underwent. It is a spring of water for you welling up to eternal life!

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to teach the Samaritan woman at the well and prepare Your Church to receive Baptism, grant me confidence in all that Jesus has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

Saturday

Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. John 4.50

The man didn't care about signs and wonders. While others might have wanted a big show from Jesus or the prophets of God, this man wanted only one thing. The only thing that mattered was the healing of his son. Nothing else was needed before this man would simply believe in Jesus.

This man needed only a word from Jesus. He needed nothing more. He knew that should Jesus give the word, his son would be healed. He had faith in Jesus, that Jesus was more powerful than sickness and death. Of course, the man had no proof of Jesus' power until after his son was healed. But still he trusted.

Isn't that how it is with the Christian. What more do you need but the word of Jesus? Do you need big signs or shows from God? Do you need God to entertain you or move you with emotion? Do you need God to prove Himself before you believe? That is not belief. Faith demands nothing of God, but simply trusts.

Faith trust the word of God. That same word that created the world, gave life to Adam and Eve, promises to Noah and Abraham, raised Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, raised dead Lazarus, and was poured out on the disciples on Pentecost is all you need. This Word speaks you clean of sin. It seems simple, as simple as Jesus telling the man to, "Go, your son will live."

Faith trusts that Jesus' word is powerful and that it accomplishes that which Jesus desires. When you hear that Jesus tells you that your sins are forgiven - so they are! When He tells you that those who live and believe in Him shall never die - so you shall not die! When he promises you life eternal - so you shall live eternally! Faith simply trusts the Word of God.

Prayer: Father, grant me to trust the Word of Your Son. He promises that His death forgives my sins and that through Word and Sacrament I receive this great forgiveness. Strengthen my trust in all that Jesus has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

Sunday

Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." John 5.8

This man had waited for thirty-eight years to be healed. The thought was that when the water of the pool was stirred up the first ones in the water would be healed. These were people that no earthly means could heal. This pool was their last and their only hope.

Into this desperate situation steps Jesus. No doubt this invalid assumes that Jesus will hurriedly help him into the water before the others and he would be healed! But that is not what Jesus had in mind. Jesus does what this man would not expect by telling him, "Get up, take your bed, and walk."

For thirty-eight years this man couldn't walk. How could his muscles support his weight? How could he have such strength to walk with no help? Only through Jesus. Jesus' words heal the paralyzed man's legs.

Jesus desires that you learn from this paralyzed man. Learn that there is no other place where you need to go, but to Jesus. Amid the multitude of other teachings and philosophies cling only to Jesus. His words are healing and life.

Learn from the paralytic that you yourself can do nothing. There is no amount of time that would be able to help you in seeking out a way to Life eternal. The paralytic could not cure himself, only Jesus could. Jesus is the only way.

Jesus must come to you. He does this through Word and Sacrament. He comes to you speaking you clean through His Word. He gives you His gifts through Baptism and the Supper. He has chosen this means that you would know exactly where to seek Him. When you hear His Word you know you hear Him. When you confess your sins you know He forgives you through your Baptismal grace. When you receive the Supper you know you receive Him. He is all you need there is nothing more.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have given Your Son for me upon the tree. Grant me to receive Him for the forgiveness of my sins. Grant me to trust in Him alone for my salvation. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.
John 5.24

Can this be the way it works? Could hearing the words of Jesus bring one from death to life? How can words do such a powerful thing?

It's not just words but the one who speaks them. It is this same One who spoke all things into existence. Jesus teaches you this throughout His earthly ministry. He creates the world with a word. He calms storms with a word. He drives out demons with a word. He raises the dead with a word. His words have power and life.

Sinners have no life, but only death. Since the first sin of Adam and Eve the entire creation was plunged into sin and under the curse of death. Each successive person was born with sin inherited from parents. Such sin makes one an enemy of God.

What could sinners do to make up their sin before God? What deed could be performed or an offering given? What does God need from sinners? There is nothing sinners could do and nothing God needs. The cause should be hopeless.

But Jesus speaks. His words are life. He travels on to the tree as promised. He fulfills the word of God. He keeps the law perfectly for you. He dies in your place under the wrath of the Father. Jesus pays for all your sins.

Jesus speaks. He speaks so that your sins are forgiven. He offers you this through the Divine Service. He speaks in Baptism that you are His; redeemed by His blood. He speaks in the Supper that as you receive Him you are forgiven. He speaks you clean.

Hearing Jesus you have passed from judgment to life. He has taken the judgment from you and grants you life. All because He speaks.

Prayer: Father in heaven, while there was nothing I could do about my sins You have given Your Son to die for my sins in my place. Send

Jesus to me through the Divine Service to speak me clean and forgive all my sins. In His Name. Amen.

Tuesday

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. John 5.28-29

How can the dead hear? Jesus continues by saying that not only will the dead hear but they will come out of the tombs. But they are dead. The dead can't hear and can't come out of the tombs.

Jesus' word is more powerful than death. The proof of this is His own resurrection. Jesus was raised on the third day and became our victory over death and the grave. He burst the bonds of death and holds the keys of death and Hades. When Jesus spoke these words the hour was coming when the dead would come from the tombs - He would do exactly this.

But even more, Jesus is only the first fruits of them that sleep. At His voice the dead will be raised. He is Lord of life and has power over death. When He commands, the dead shall be raised. Death cannot resist His voice. Those who have done good will rise to life.

These are the ones covered by the blood of Jesus. They have washed their robes through Baptism into Christ and are covered with His righteousness. These are the ones who understand their sinfulness and repent. They know they are not worthy of what Jesus has done and yet receive His mercy as a gift.

Those who have done evil will rise to the resurrection of judgment. These are the ones left and lost in their sin. They have rejected Jesus and His mercy. Their sins still cling to them. They shall rise also, but to condemnation.

These words of Jesus are both a warning and hope. Warning for those who resist the mercy of God and great hope for those who seek God in Christ in the Divine Service. Rejoice to hear His voice now as He forgives your sins. Seek Him where He is found in love and mercy for you.

Prayer: Father, I am a sinner. Forgive my sins through the death that my Savior, Jesus, died for me. Grant me to live in Him all the days of

my life. Raise me in the resurrection of life and bring me to my eternal home through Christ. In His Name. Amen.

Wednesday

And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen. . John 5.37

They have never seen or heard the Father. So what was that in the Old Testament? People saw and heard God many times in the Old Testament. All the times people saw the angel of the Lord, who was that? When Moses stood on holy ground before the burning bush, who spoke to him? Who was that prince of the Lord's army that met Joshua before Jericho? Who spoke to the prophets?

All those theophanies were the preincarnate Son (that is, Jesus before His incarnation). Each time the Father sent His Son to speak to mankind. When people heard the voice of God they heard the preincarnate Jesus.

But even though no one has ever heard or seen the Father, Jesus says that the Father bears witness about Him. He bears witness about Jesus by sending Jesus. The triune God works the same way throughout history. The Father sends, the Son is sent and accomplishes the will of the Father, and the Spirit brings Christ to sinners.

The Father bears witness about the Son in sending the Son. He bears witness that this is His beloved Son. As the Son accomplishes the will of the Father by doing miracles He reveals the gracious nature of the Father. The Father is shown in mercy at the tree pouring our judgment over our sins on His beloved Son. God is love.

The Father bears witness that Jesus is His Son as Jesus dies. Jesus bears witness about the Father as He follows the Father's will to death. This shows you how much the triune God loves you. Thus we bear witness about the mercy of the Father and the work of Jesus in our lives. We know our gracious God and live and speak of Him.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have borne witness about Jesus, Your Son. Grant me to bear witness in my life about all that You have done for me through Jesus. I rejoice that You have covered my sins with His blood. Give me chances to tell others all that You have done for me. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday

But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." John 6.20

Jesus' words here are remarkable. John makes this point over and over. Jesus keeps saying these two words; "I am." Jesus says:

"I am the bread of life." (John 6.35)

"I am the light of the world." (John 8.12)

"I am the gate for the sheep." (John 10.7)

"I am the Good Shepherd." (John 10.11)

"I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11.25)

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14.6)

"I am the true vine." (John 15.1)

"I am the door for the sheep." (John 10.7)

Over and over and over again Jesus makes this point - He is the I am. He spoke these words to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3.14. When Moses was full of excuses, He was quieted by the Name of God - I Am.

This one is Jesus. He spoke to Moses. He saved the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. He led them through the wilderness and gave them the law on Mt. Sinai. He conquered the Promised Land for them. He sent them judges and prophets. He gave them the kings. Jesus did all for them.

Amid the fear and confusion on the sea, God comes. The same one who calmed Moses' fear and saved His people. Jesus comes to His disciples to calm their fears and save them. But Jesus comes not to save from Egyptians or storms, but from the power of sin, the might of the devil, and the sting of death.

Jesus does this as He keeps Himself holy traveling to the tree. He lays down His perfect life for His disciples and for all. Through His death sinners are saved from sin and eternal death. Jesus does it all.

Fear not! Your sin has been paid for. Fear not! Your death has been undone. Fear not! The evil one cannot accuse you. Jesus has died for you!

Prayer: Father, You have sent Your Son to die in my place, He has paid the full price for my sin. Bring Jesus to me and I would fear not. Forgive me and strengthen my faith in Jesus. In His Name. Amen.

Friday

It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— John 6.45

What a day that would be! Isaiah talks of the children being taught by God: “All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children.” (Isaiah 54.13) To have the children taught by God and this great peace would be such an idyllic time.

Jeremiah speaks of this also, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jeremiah 31.33) God would do it. He would give the law and teach the law. It would be taught so well that it would be written on the hearts of the people. They would each know the Lord!

That day had come. He was right there in front of them teaching. He was telling them how He was the bread of life. That if they believed in Him they would have eternal life. But the Jews refused to believe this, they grumbled saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (John 6.52) They did not understand what the Lord was teaching.

So you understand. Be taught by the Lord. He has come to teach and make you one of His learners. He teaches you that you do not live by bread alone. The Israelites ate manna in the wilderness and died. Jesus gives more. He gives you Himself. On the cross Jesus gives Himself for the forgiveness of your sins. He gives you Himself in the Supper to eat and drink. He is the bread of life that by believing in Him you would have eternal life and never be hungry again.

Be more than a learner and receive this great gift. Jesus comes to you through the Divine Service to speak forgiveness to you and give you Himself in the Supper. Come and be taught by God.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have given Your Son to teach me and give me Himself. Grant me to receive Jesus with great joy knowing all that He has done for me on the cross. Wash me clean through Baptism and feed me in the Supper. In His Name. Amen.

Saturday

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. John 6.47

These words of Jesus are powerful! “Whoever believes has eternal life.” Note the tense, this is the present tense. These words of Jesus don’t speak of some hope in the long distant future - maybe, hopefully, we will get to heaven someday and have eternal life... No. Believing, you have eternal life now - right now.

This was what Jesus was offering those in John chapter six, eternal life right now. They were grumbling and doubting, but Jesus offered them the gift beyond all others - eternal life. This life came not by eating manna as their father’s had (which is what the crowd wanted), but by receiving the true bread from heaven; Jesus. Receiving Jesus was to have eternal life right now.

But how can this be? Doesn’t the Christian have to wait to get to heaven? Isn’t eternal life something a long way in the future? That is not how Jesus speaks. His words are truth and life. Receiving Jesus through Baptism one has eternal life right now. Sins forgiven one lives in a state of grace. How much closer to Jesus could you get than hearing His word and receiving Him in the Supper. Isn’t this heaven? Isn’t this eternal life?

Heaven is the presence of Jesus. He is with you through your Baptism into Him. You are in heaven even now! You need not wait, He has given you life and life more abundantly. He who lives and believes in Him shall never die for you have life now. Baptism is your death and resurrection. You have the fullness of Jesus and eternal life now.

But not yet. You are still on this earth and still plagued with sin within and without. Even better life awaits you. When your body stops you will have that better life. And on the Last Day you will have a better life still. Jesus will raise you up and perfect your body. So you will always be with Him. This is eternal life and it is yours now in Jesus.

Prayer: Father, I thank You that You have sent Jesus to die for me and forgive my sins. I thank you that You have given me eternal life. Grant me to live in Jesus now and forever. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Sunday

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." John 6.68

The crowds had heard and they were leaving in droves. They heard Jesus and were disappointed that He was not doing more miracles. They wanted bread and Jesus wanted to give them eternal life. Disappointed, many leave.

But what about the twelve disciples? Would they leave too? When Jesus asks them Peter made a wonderful confession, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6.68) Peter is right, Jesus has the words of eternal life. Even more, Jesus is the word of eternal life.

Jesus is the creative Word that made all things and He is the One who recreates all things. The disciples have seen the power of His words. The word of Jesus brought Nathanael to faith, called the disciples to follow, turned water to wine, healed an official's son, healed a man at the pool of Bethesda, fed thousands, and calmed their fears when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water. Without Jesus there is no life, only Jesus can speak life into sinners.

Jesus does exactly that. He speaks life into sinners. He travels the way of the cross to give His life on the tree that sinners would not die but live. Through His death sinners receive life. At Baptism Jesus gives this life. He speaks you clean and joins you to Himself and His saving death. You receive the benefits of all He did for you. He speaks you clean as you hear His word. He declares your sins forgiven time and time again in the Divine Service. He speaks you clean as you receive His body and blood in the Supper. Where else should we go? He has the words of eternal life.

Jesus not only has those words, but desires to speak them to you. How He delights to speak you clean of your sins! How He rejoices to give you His word! Thus, we cling to Him and His word as Peter did. He has the words of eternal life.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have sent Your Son to die. Bring Him to me so that He would speak me clean through His death. Grant me to flee to His words of eternal life. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday

The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. John 7.18

The Jews were marveling that Jesus had all this learning, but had never studied. No famous rabbi could claim Jesus as his pupil, and Jesus never claimed to have authority from any rabbi. No doubt many would boast of the great masters they learned from, but not Jesus.

But Jesus' teaching is not His own. Although He claimed no earthly rabbi as His teacher, Jesus was sent from another. From the Father, Jesus was sent. Jesus does not seek His own glory but that of the Father. He came to do the will of the Father and give the Father all glory and honor by obeying the will of the Father.

This is the message that Jesus brings. He speaks of the Father and the Father's will. What then is the Father's will? That the Son would come and join Himself to flesh. That God would take on flesh and then offer that flesh on the cross for the salvation of sinners. This was what the Father wanted and Jesus followed that will. His teaching spoke of the one who sent Him.

But who is the Father? We understand the character of the Father as we see what Jesus does. The Father is loving and merciful. He sends His Son to save sinners. The Father would not have sinners die in their sins, but be saved from them. Thus, He sends the Son. Thus, the Son dies on the tree for sinners.

This is beyond the teaching and wisdom of men. Those who hear Jesus know how radically different He speaks. His teaching is of the Father, from mercy and love. The Father still desires the salvation of sinners; your salvation. For you the Father sent His Son. For you Jesus came and offered His life. For you the Father sends His Spirit to teach you all that Jesus has done for you. Such is the will of the Father.

Prayer: Father, I thank You that You have sent Your Son for me. Grant me to hear Jesus and to know that You are true. Forgive me and strengthen my faith in all that Jesus has done. In His Name. Amen.

Tuesday

Jesus said, *“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”* John 7.38

Ezekiel saw it all. He saw a new Temple. The one on earth had just been destroyed by the Babylonians, but this one was new. It was unlike any other Temple and from this Temple there was water flowing (Ezekiel 47). This water flowed out of the Temple and washed on the earth.

When the people of the Northern kingdom came back from Babylon they rebuilt the Temple, but it was not the one Ezekiel saw. Ezekiel’s Temple was not made with human hands. The word became flesh and tabernacled among us- here was the Temple Ezekiel saw: Jesus Christ.

The Temple was where God dwelt for His people in mercy. Is that not Jesus? In that flesh God dwelt in mercy for His people. Upon the cross, after Jesus died, the soldier pierced Jesus’ side and blood and water flowed forth. For John, that water is the cleansing water of Baptism.

This water comes upon the sinner as a cleansing flood, washing away sin. It wells up to everlasting life. But this water also flows out. The Christian lives differently than the world. What Jesus had done impacts the Christian. Paul reminds you that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6.19). God dwells with you and in you. Into the world you are sent out to impact the lives of others. You bring Jesus to them, this living water goes out from you as you bring Jesus.

So cling to Jesus where He is found that you would take Him with you into this dark world. Drown your sins again and again through your Baptismal grace. Hear His word of forgiveness in the absolution. Rejoice to hear His word as He speaks to you. Give thanks to receive Him in bread and wine. Let this well up in you and outpour to others.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have sent Your Son as the true Temple who was crushed for me on the tree. I thank You for joining me to Jesus’ death through Baptism. Grant me to live and speak of your mercy. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday

So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. John 8.28

What Jesus does testifies to who He is. Even more than the sermons He preaches or the miracles He does, the cross shows who He is. The miracles show the loving and merciful nature of God. Jesus always stops for those in need. For a blind man crying out, "Lord, have mercy!" Jesus has mercy. A father who implores help for his possessed son. Jesus has mercy. Even upon hungry crowds whom the disciples can't feed. Jesus has mercy. No miracle was done for its own sake or to help Jesus, but all were directed at others.

Jesus speaks, not for Himself, but for others. The parables tell of a merciful God. A shepherd seeking a sheep and rejoicing at its finding. A Samaritan saving a stranger and paying for his care. A master who forgave a servant of a huge debt. A father who welcomes back a sinful son. Each parable has Jesus at the center - His love, His mercy, His compassion.

Each miracle and each parable speaks of who Jesus is and what He had come to do. He is true God and true man who had come to have compassion on sinners. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to rescue sinners from the kingdom of the evil one and save them eternally.

His compassion is seen on the cross. That was the entire reason Jesus came; to give His life on the tree for sinners. The miracles and parables point to what He would do on the tree. This was the will of the Father, the one who sent Him. The Father desired to crush Jesus under your sins on the tree. Jesus followed that will and plan for you. He suffered the punishment for your sins, see His great compassion!

Jesus still speaks. That word of forgiveness flowing from the cross toward you. You are forgiven through the death that Jesus died. You know He is the Christ through His death in your place.

Prayer: Father, I thank You for sending Your Son to die in my place. All His miracles and parables speak to Your compassion. Forgive me through Jesus and grant that I speak of your goodness and love. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples." John 8.31

The Son abides in the word of the Father. That difficult world which led Jesus on to the cross. Jesus made His living and being in the word and will of the Father. This is what it means to be a disciple - to hear the word of the master and to live and obey that word. This Jesus did and He invites you to do the same.

He invites you to be a disciple. He invites you to learn the word which He speaks and accomplishes. Such learning is not limited to a certain season of your life, but your whole life long. You see what Jesus did? He did not just listen and follow the Father for a little while, but His whole earthly life. So also you are invited to hear and follow the words of Jesus.

Let Him be your teacher; hear His words. He speaks law. He shows you your sins and your deep need for a Savior. You can't make up your sins before the Father. The Father knows them all, even better than you do. He speaks that you should fear, love, and trust in Him above all things - yet you do not. You should be holy as He is, but you are not.

Hear His words. He speaks Gospel. Jesus does all the work of your salvation. While you were so sinful and could do nothing before the Father, Jesus does all. He takes your place under the law and lives the perfect life. He takes your sins on the tree and dies for them in your place. He does all for you. Receive His words and be forgiven.

Abide in this word of law and Gospel, confessing your sins and receiving Jesus. If you abide in His word you are truly His disciple. Rely on Him for all. Trust Him to provide. Take up your cross and follow Him. He sets you free from all sin and from eternal death.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son followed Your will and word perfectly. Grant me to abide in the word of Jesus, confessing my sins and receiving forgiveness through His death. Give me zeal to speak His word and live His word that others would see Your mercy in my life. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday

Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God. John 8.47

They heard, but had not heard. The words of Jesus fell upon them but they refused. They reject Jesus thinking that they don't need Him. After all, they are the children of Abraham! They have a right to God by the lineage that they share. They are a chosen people; the descendants of Abraham.

But they would not hear. To hear Jesus is to understand the truth about oneself and the truth that genealogy does not matter. It matters not of the illustrious people or deeds that were done in their family tree. The truth is that sinners are sinners. From sinners you were born and in sin you live. Shall you listen to God who speaks law to you?

The word of God convicts you of your sin. You are a slave to sin. The word of God demands perfection in your love and trust of God. Do you love God above all things? To love God is to never sin against Him. To love God is to fulfill the law in its entirety. This means to love your neighbor as yourself. To help and serve your neighbor in every way.

But even more than our outward obedience, God demands your heart. God demands that you keep His law with all your heart, your thoughts, and your desires. He would have you serve Him willingly and joyfully each moment not just by what you do but in your thinking. For sinners this is not possible. You do not keep His law or His word.

Repent. Repent of your sins and hear His word. He offers to set you free from your sins. Jesus travels on to the cross and lays down His life in payment for your sins. He sets you free from sin and death through His death for you. Hear His word of forgiveness as He makes you a child of God; not through lineage but through His death.

The words that Jesus speaks are life and truth. He speaks you clean from sin and sets you free. He does all for you out of love. Hear Him.

Prayer: Father, I thank You for sending Your Son to speak me clean of my sins through your death. Grant me to live as Your dear child always hearing the word of my Savior. In His Name. Amen.

Saturday

The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'"

John 8.52

In John 8:51, Jesus had just told the Jews, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." The Jews knew that Abraham died as did the prophets. Could Jesus be greater than them? Could Jesus be greater than Moses or David who both died? Just by keeping the word of Jesus one will never taste death, how can this be?

Jesus is greater than Abraham, Moses, and David. They all died, but in Jesus they did not taste death. Jesus offers life amid death for those who have ears to hear. Abraham saw the day of Jesus and rejoiced. The crowd should rejoice at the day of Jesus too!

Abraham saw that in God there is life, not death. As he was about to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac, God provided a ram in the thicket to be used as a sacrifice in the place of Isaac. Abraham trusted in God to provide for he said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." Isaac's life was saved, the ram sacrificed.

On the mountain of the Lord it is provided. The Father's beloved son, Jesus, is sacrificed on the tree. Salvation and life are provided, not just for one, but all. Abraham rejoiced to see the sacrifice and mercy provided by God. Here the sacrifice is offered before the Father, even Jesus. Mercy is given! Death is stopped and life is given to sinners!

Those in Jesus do not taste death. Yes, bodies stop. Indeed, it looks like death has dominion over sinners. But in Jesus there is no death, only life. Those faithful receive not death, but life when their bodies stop. They receive a better life with Jesus. Even on the Last Day, when their bodies are raised, they receive yet a better life. There is no sting of death but only victory in Christ.

Prayer: Father, You have given Your Son to die in my place and provided for me. Grant me to rejoice that Jesus has tasted death so that I never will. Grant me life eternal through Him. In His Name. Amen.

Sunday

Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." John 9.3

A man born blind spurs on this question from the disciples of Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9.2) Oh how little the disciples understood sin! They thought that doing something wrong would bring on the punishment of God and doing something right would gain the favor of God. But this is not how it is.

There is nothing the sinner can do right before God - not one thing. The best of our intentions are tainted with sin. The most holy actions and pious deeds remain sinful before God. The law always accuses. To the blind man, his parents, the disciples, and even to you, the law points its finger. You have failed. You have not loved God nor man. You have not lived a holy life. You are sinful.

Your sins pile up before you. Before God they are all the same - sins. They all must be punished. The wages of sin is death and eternal separation from God. For the disciples to assume that one sin or another would be worse before God shows their ignorance of the law. For them to assume that this or that sin would be punished while others would not, shows their misuse of the law.

But Jesus teaches them that man and his parents are sinners living in a sinful world. God often uses bad things, even suffering, to further His purpose. Through this blind man the mercy of God is revealed. He is healed.

Jesus has come to save all the sick from sin. He has come to overturn each sin and pay the full price for them. Under the strict condemnation of the law Jesus suffers for you. The Father uses His suffering for your greatest good; to display His mercy toward you.

You see how God works. Amid sin and suffering He desires to show you mercy and love. Flee to Him; His word and Sacraments. There is mercy for you. There is forgiveness and salvation.

Prayer: Father, You have sent Your Son to show Your mercy. Give this mercy to me, flowing from the cross of Jesus, to cover all my sins. Knowing the severity of my sins grant me to know your mercy even more. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday

Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." John 9.37

Jesus healed the blind man, but the blind man's neighbors did not believe he had been healed. The neighbors brought him to the Pharisees and the Pharisees knew that Jesus could not be from God for He healed the man on the Sabbath. Even the blind man's parents were brought in and questioned!

The Pharisees cast the man who had once been blind out. Jesus had found the man once and He finds him again. The man had been given a great gift of sight, but what must he have felt to not have neighbors rejoicing with him?

Jesus rejoiced with him. Sight restored, the seeing man was able to see the Son of Man; Jesus. The Son of Man spoke words of mercy to the man who could see. A sharp contrast to the unseeing neighbors and Pharisees who could not, would not, see Jesus.

Jesus came to reveal Himself to sinners. The blind man could see, can you? Do you see that Jesus' death on the tree was and is for you? Do you see that His mercy flows to you even now through Baptism, Supper, and the Word? Do you hear Him forgive your sins over and over in the Divine Service? Do you see Him?

The seeing man worshiped Jesus. He received, gratefully, the mercy of God. He knew that there was nothing he could do to repay Jesus. So you also worship. Receive Jesus through Word and Sacrament. He takes away your guilt and grants you sight to see all that He has done for you.

How many had a chance to see! The neighbors, parents, Pharisees all had the opportunity to witness the mercy of God through the blind man. So also you, give others chances to see all that God has done for you. He has had mercy upon you so speak His grace to all those who you come in contact with.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son to have mercy on sinners. Open my eyes to see all that Jesus has done for me. Open my heart to receive His mercy. Open my lips to speak His praise. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday

So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."
John 10.7

The words of Jesus are clear, He is the door of the sheep. There is only one way for the sheep to go to find safety and rest; in Jesus. The sheep hear His voice as He calls them by name. No stranger will the sheep follow, but only the Good Shepherd. When the sheep enter by this door they will be saved.

Jesus speaks and draws you in. He speaks your name at Baptism and forgives your sins. He covers you with His death upon the tree. He washes you in the blood He shed for you. He clothes you with forgiveness and eternal life. Here is the door to eternal life for you!

Jesus opens this door for you. You are saved, not by your works, but through His death. Jesus has kept the law for you. He gives you His righteousness through your Baptism into Him. Jesus does the work. He speaks you clean.

When you enter the door, you are saved and find pasture. In Jesus you have eternal life. You need not wait for it, you have it now. You live in Him and shall never die even as Jesus says (John 11.26). You find pasture in Him. In Jesus there is good food! You enter into the church that you would continue to receive Jesus.

He gives you Himself through the Word. He is the Word and as you hear and read, you receive Him. He gives you Himself through Baptism. Baptism is not a one-time thing and then over forevermore but it is an ongoing reality in which you live. You drown your sins through Baptism continually. You receive that absolution over and over. Jesus gives you Himself through the Supper. You receive Jesus again and again for the forgiveness of your sins. He leads you into His pasture!

Jesus opens the way to life for you. He speaks you clean. He washes you through Baptism. He feeds you in His Supper. He does all for you. So receive the great gifts He has for you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You have given Jesus to be the door of the sheep. Lead me to Jesus that I would enter and find life and pasture. Feed me through Word and Sacrament and keep me as yours eternally. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday

“And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” John 10.16

There is no flock of one sheep. Flocks include many sheep. So it is with the flock of Jesus. There are many sheep; there are other sheep also. These other sheep are the Gentiles. These others sheep all people of all nations and tribes. Jesus had just said that He will lay down His life for the sheep. Now He makes clear who these sheep are; they are all people.

Jesus tells us that He will bring these other sheep also. And so He will. He will bring them the same way, through Word and Baptism. Soon enough the apostles will go out to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the world. They will bring this gift of Word and water to all they meet. Jesus has died for all.

But notice who brings these sheep; Jesus. He calls them from sin to follow Him. He gives them life through His death. He does the work of salvation for them. He lays down His life for them.

This is not so impersonal. Jesus does this for you. You are one of His sheep. He was born for you. He was baptized by John in the Jordan river for you. He worked miracles and spoke parables for you. He traveled on to the tree and died for you. He gives you His Word and the gift of Baptism. He feeds you still with His body and blood. He fulfills these words of calling other sheep in your life as He calls you to follow.

So follow. Receive Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Receive Him through Word and Sacrament. There is one flock and one shepherd. Join with the flock in worship to receive and give thanks to the Good Shepherd. He has bought you and brought you into His kingdom. Rejoice in Him!

Prayer: Father, Your Son has laid down His life for a wayward sheep like me. Grant me to rejoice and receive all that Jesus has done for me. Give me zeal to speak of Jesus to those around me for He has died for all. In His Name. Amen.

Thursday

My sheep bear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. John 10.27 .

What comfort Jesus gives to His sheep! They hear His voice and He knows them and they follow Him. Isn't that exactly what sheep do? They hear the voice of their shepherd and they follow. Of course, the shepherd knows each and every one of his sheep! So it is with Jesus.

Jesus knows each and every one of His sheep. He is your creator and knows you intimately. Even more He knows all your sins and failings. He knows all the times you have sinned against Him or against your fellow sheep. But your Good Shepherd loves you! He loves you so much that He would die in your place, for your sins, under the wrath of the Father. He pays the full price for each and every one of your sins on the cross! What other shepherd would do such a thing for his sheep?

Jesus knows you. He knows that you need someone to save you. So He does. He comes to you through Baptism and brings to you forgiveness and life. He gives you His Word that you would know your Shepherd. He promises to hear you when you pray and help and comfort you. He knows you and has mercy on you.

So be His sheep. Hear His voice. That is, read and hear Scripture. That is what Jesus says His sheep do. Receive Him through Baptism and the Supper, be close to your Shepherd. Follow Him; that is, wherever life takes you, keep hearing His Word and receiving Him. He knows how much you need Him. Jesus offers Himself to you, so receive.

This is the way it is: the Shepherd protects the sheep and makes sure they are well fed. So let Jesus be your Shepherd and receive Him. Be well fed on His Word rejoicing to hear His voice.

Prayer: Father in heaven, I thank You that You have sent me a Good Shepherd. I thank You that Jesus knows me! Grant me to hear His Word and receive Him constantly that I would always follow Jesus, my Good Shepherd. In His Name. Amen.

Friday

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." John 11.23

Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. He was dead. Any talk about him rising again would be lost in the grief of the mourners. How could they consider such a thing at such a time?

But this was what Jesus said to the sister of the dead man, “Your brother will rise again.” Mary knows the hopeful expectation of the people of God, that there will be a resurrection from the dead. Job talked about this confidently saying that his redeemer lived and he would see that redeemer with his own eyes. Abraham knew that should he sacrifice Isaac, God would somehow raise him from the dead to fulfill His promises.

Martha also trusts that there will be a resurrection on the Last Day. “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” What faith she has! At the death of her brother she trusts that he is with God and God will raise him in time. But this is not what Jesus means. Jesus means that Lazarus will rise now. He will come out of the grave today and be given back to family and friends.

Jesus teaches what happens to those who trust in Him. This resurrection happens in Baptism as the person is joined to the death that Jesus died. You die with Christ in Baptism and are raised up. You live in the forgiveness of sins, being raised from the dead. You live in a state of grace.

This is what Jesus does. He rolls back sin and death and brings forgiveness and life. Not even death can stop Him! The devil can rage and fume, but to no avail. Jesus saves and rescues sinners from death. You also! Jesus forgives your sins through His death on the cross. He raises you up through your Baptism. He comes to rescue you now, you need not wait for the Last Day.

Your salvation is now. You are with Jesus now. You receive Him now. He forgives you now. He defeats your death now. You are alive in Him now and forever more.

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son who is Lord of life and death. Cover me with the death that Jesus died and forgive my sins. Raise me from death through Baptism that I would live with You eternally. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Saturday

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." John 11.25

What is death? The stopping of the heart, the ceasing of brain activity? This is one death. The other is eternal death in hell. Jesus speaks of the first here. Though your heart may stop and brain function cease, still there is life in Him. This life is not unusual. It is the life the believer lives even before physical death.

In the next verse Jesus says, "Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." Here He speaks of the second death, that eternal death in hell. This death passes over the believer. You shall not die this death.

But even more than this could be said. Paul reminds the believer, in Romans 6, about death. Your death has already happened. You have died with Christ through Baptism. You are more than just joined to Jesus, you die with Him and He with you. His death becomes your death. This has happened already through your Baptism into Jesus.

If, then, you have died through Baptism into Christ, you have been raised up to a new life. You shall not die for you have already died through Baptism. You shall never die again. Thus, even when your body stops you do not die, but receive a better life.

When your body stops, you receive a better life in Christ. The body of sin is done away with you and you live in perfect bliss. Then on the Last Day when Christ comes back you shall receive a better life still. Your body will be raised and you will be with your Lord, body and soul. In this way death is defeated and destroyed. Jesus is the Lord of the living! Through Him alone there is life. But this life you have now, right now! In Him you will receive a better, and better life.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You are Lord of all things. You gave Your Son all authority in heaven and earth. Cover me with my Baptismal grace. Remind me that there is only life in Jesus and grant that I live and walk in His mercy and goodness. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Sunday

When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." John 11.43

Can words overcome reality? Jesus' Words seem to be able to do exactly this. His Words to the storm calmed it. His Words to demons sent them flying in retreat. His Words to sickness brought health to the suffering. Even His Words to death roll back death itself.

Jesus is the Word of God and all was made through Him. He teaches you that He has come to recreate by the power of His Word. He recreates creation, defeats the forces of evil, and even destroys the bonds of death. He has come to accomplish the redemption of sinners.

When Jesus speaks, evil listens and obeys. This shows sinners who is in control. When Jesus speaks you clean of your sins, what happens then? You are forgiven! When He promises that Baptism now saves you, what happens? You are saved! When Jesus promises that bread and wine are His body and blood and that these forgive sins, what happens? They forgive sins.

Jesus speaks for you. Each word He speaks is for you. He travels to the tree to forgive your sins. He speaks you clean from the cross. He shows you the irresistible power of His Word through the miracles He performs. You can have confidence that your sins are forgiven.

Lazarus teaches you. The dead can live. You were dead in your sins and trespasses, but Jesus spoke life into you through Baptism. You were called from death to follow Him. While you were still sinful Jesus died for you. You are unbound from your sins for they bound Jesus on the tree. He was struck down in your place. He took the punishment meant for you so that He could speak you clean.

So you are raised to a new life. You are forgiven through Jesus. He does speak you clean. You are to live a new life of service to your neighbor and love of God, so live!

Prayer: Father, Your Son spoke life into dead Lazarus and grants me new life through His death. Grant me to live in loving service to my neighbor that others would see Your great compassion toward me. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."
John 12.23

Jesus' words ring true. The glorification of the Son of Man is a theme that runs through John's Gospel. John tells us that the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7.39). Jesus tells the disciples that Lazarus' illness does not lead to death, but that He would be glorified through it (John 11.4). Amid the confusion of the disciples, John reminds us that they understand after Jesus is glorified (John 12.6).

What is this glorification of Jesus, the Son of Man? As Jesus talks of leaving His disciples He tells them that, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified through him." (John 13.31) John saw this glory (John 1.14) and the miracles of Jesus attest to it (John 2.11). The glory of Jesus is wrapped up in the Father's will.

It was the will of the Father to send His Son to this earth. The Son of God took on flesh. But the will of the Father sent the Son on to die. There, on the cross, is the Son glorified by doing the will of the Father. The Son glorifies the Father by dying for the sins of sinners, as the Father wanted. The Son shows that the Father is love through His death.

The Father glorifies the Son by sending Him to the tree to die. The Father shows His love by giving His Son this mission. Who else could be the sufficient sacrifice for sin? In the will of the Father and through His death the Son is glorified.

You share in this glory. As the Spirit brings the death of the Son to you through Baptism. You are washed clean of sin. This is what the Father wanted and why the Father sent His Son. Jesus was sent for you and died for you that you would share in this glory. Such glory is given to you each time you are in the Divine Service. Jesus is there covering you with His death. Such is the will of the Father.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son to be glorified in death. Cover me with His death and forgive all my sins. Give me times to speak and live Your grace and mercy in my life that others might see the glory of Your Son. In His Name. Amen.

Tuesday

If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. John 12.47

The one who hears Jesus, hears the one who sent Him. The one who sees Jesus, sees the one who sent Him. The one who rejects Jesus' words, rejects the one who sent Him. This is the way it is, law for those under the law and Gospel for those in Jesus.

For those who refuse to acknowledge their sins there is law upon law. The law only ever accuses. It shines back to the sinner all that he or she has done wrong. It accuses and will accept no excuses. The law does not budge. There is nothing the sinner can say to make up sins before the law. There is nothing the sinner can do to make up sins before the law either. There is nothing. The law accuses and the law is holy and right.

For those who acknowledge their sins there is Gospel. Those who are beat up by the accusations of the law, understanding their own faults and failings, there is mercy. This is totally undeserved by the sinner. What could a sinner do or say to earn mercy? Such mercy is given only because God is love and mercy. It is the delight of the Father to show mercy upon sinners and forgive through the death of His Son.

Jesus does the will of the Father. He had come to save sinners through His death on the tree, He had not come to judge the world. He came to seek and save the lost. How often He spoke mercy to sinners! Yet, how often He spoke law to the self-righteous. Jesus accomplished salvation for sinners on the tree.

He came to save, but He will come back to judge the living and the dead. There will be a time when sinners have no more time to repent. There will be a time when no more Gospel is given to the self-righteous. So believe in Jesus and the One who sent Him. Trust Jesus' death for the forgiveness of your sins. Flee to Jesus in the Divine Service and receive His mercy.

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to have mercy on me at the cross. Forgive my sins through Jesus that when He comes again I would rejoice to see Him face to face and be with Him eternally in paradise. In His Name. Amen.

Wednesday

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? John 14.2

Jesus tells them that He goes to prepare a place for them. In the Father's house are many rooms and as a gracious host, Jesus prepares rooms for His disciples. But this should be no surprise for them. Jesus tells them that He goes and prepares a room for them. If this were not so, why would He tell them?

While the disciples are confused by what Jesus tells them, Jesus is certain. He knows exactly where He is going. He is preparing a place for them. The disciples are sinners and do not deserve a place in heaven by their own merit. They need another to save them from their sins and condemnation of the law.

Jesus saves them. He travels on to the cross and lays down His life for them. Through His death their sins are paid for. The Father pours out all His wrath against the sins of sinners on Jesus at the tree. Jesus fulfilled the law for the disciples through His holy life and paid for their sins through His suffering and death.

But this is not just for His disciples, Jesus prepares a room for you too in heaven. He kept Himself holy for you. He offered His perfect life before the Father on the tree for you. He paid for your sins there. That room is prepared for you through His death.

Jesus offers you what He has won on the cross through the Means of Grace. Through Baptism you are joined to the death that Jesus died and your sins are forgiven. The Word declares that you are forgiven through Jesus. The Supper gives you the body and blood of Jesus - given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins. Jesus has prepared that room for you and gives it to you.

What then is left to do? Receive Jesus continually for the forgiveness of your sins. As you do this, love your neighbor that he or she would know the love of God through your words and actions. Jesus has prepared a room for you and for all.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your love toward me never ends. Cover me again with the death that Jesus died and forgive my sins. Grant me to love my neighbor that all around me would know the depths of Your love. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday

Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." John 14.23

Jesus speaks. The words of Jesus are law and Gospel. But what of these words? "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word..." Sounds great! Just keep Jesus' words to show your love for Him. Who would say that they don't love Jesus? No Christian would! But, dig deeper.

Do you really love Jesus? If you do, Jesus says that you will keep His commands. Which commands? Those Ten Commandments that He wrote for Moses on Mt. Sinai? That we would love God above all things (have no other gods, honor His Name, and worship rightly) and love our neighbors as ourselves (honor authorities, not murder or lust, not covet). Simple enough, right?

If you love Jesus you will keep His commandments. You will love God perfectly. You will have no other gods. You will never put self or job or family before God. Nothing will get before your worship of God, you will always be in the Father's house. You love to study the word of God. You honor God with your words and life.

You would never hate or lust after your neighbor. You would never want anything bad to happen to him or her. You never covet what another has or think you deserve it while they don't. You help and support your neighbor in every physical need.

Jesus speaks law to us. We do not love Him for we do not keep His commandments. We sin against God and man. There is only one who keeps the commandments – Jesus. He follows them all perfectly for you. He follows the will of the Father all the way to the tree and lays down His life for sinners like you. While your love of God is not perfect, His love for you is.

He loves you so much that He would come to you time and again in the Divine Service. He is present to forgive your sins and strengthen your faith. He speaks you clean amid your sins.

Prayer: Father, while my love of You is often filled with sin and evil, Your love for me is perfect. You gave Jesus to die in my place. Forgive me and let me live as Your child. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday

Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. John 15.3

Jesus is the true vine. Those who are in Him are clean. He speaks sinners clean and grafts them into Him. Those who do not bear fruit are taken away by the vinedresser. The invitation Jesus offers to His disciples is to abide in Him.

No branch can bear fruit by itself, it must be connected to the vine. No sinner is clean of him or herself. Jesus does not speak that the branches should try their best or that they can be clean in themselves. Branches must abide in the vine and receive from the vine.

The disciples had been doing this. They had been abiding in the vine. They saw what Jesus had been doing and heard His teaching. They were with Him and in Him. Because they were in Jesus they would bear much fruit.

Isn't this the way it is? It is not about us being morally good enough, but Jesus does the work to make us clean. Jesus lays down His perfect life on the tree for your sake. He takes your uncleanness of sin on Himself and pays the full price. He gives you His cleanness. He speaks you clean through Baptism. There He joins you to His death and grants you forgiveness.

Jesus keeps on speaking you clean. Every time you hear the absolution you are spoken clean. Every time you drown your sins in your Baptismal grace you are spoken clean by Jesus. He speaks you clean as He gives you His body and blood in the Supper. He makes you a branch and grafts you unto Himself.

You are in Jesus so bear much fruit. The Father, the vinedresser, prunes that you would bear more fruit. Suffering comes into your life that you would rely more on Jesus. Difficulty and hardship enter your life that you would trust the words of the true vine. Bear fruit. Hear Jesus and live in Him. Love and support those around you. Fill up your joy!

Prayer: Father in heaven, You are the vinedresser who prunes the branches. I thank You for grafting me into the true vine. Grant me to abide in Him and bear much fruit. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Saturday

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. John 15.16

Jesus told the disciples that they did not choose him. They didn't? Well, remember that Jesus walked by Simon and Andrew and called them away from their fishing? The same happened with James and John. Even Levi was called by Jesus to leave his tax collecting and follow Jesus. Jesus chose them and called them.

While we were still sinful Christ died for us. He chose you also. Before the foundation of the world, as Paul writes in Romans 8.29-30, God knew you and chose you. He called you, according to His purpose in your life and has justified and glorified you. He did the work while you remained passive.

This is justification, God does the work for us. It must be this way for we are born sinful before God. Giving all the time in the world we would never be able to find or come to God. We remain sinful, bent and turned away from God. He must choose us, He must call us, He must come to us.

God does this! He chooses you and comes to you. While you were sinful, even before the world began, He chose you. He came to you amid your sins and gave you His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. You received it.

Our response to Jesus choosing us is sanctification. That's the, 'what now?', after we've been saved. Our response is to joyfully continue to receive Jesus through Word and Sacrament and offer our prayers and petitions to God. We gladly help and serve our neighbor with his or her needs because we have been so served by God.

Jesus puts us in our place. We receive. He gives. Once we have received from Him, we go and give to others. Ask the Father to give you more Jesus. Ask Him to give you more chances to help those around you. He will answer.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son to choose me through His death. Cover me with Jesus and forgive my sins. Give me more opportunities to serve my neighbors to your glory and my joy. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Sunday

When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. John 18.6

It seems like Jesus is a helpless victim. Isn't He at the mercy of the Jewish authorities and powerful Romans? Not at all! Jesus is the true God. He could summon legions of angels to protect Him. Of course, He is more powerful than all the legions of angels! He could protect Himself. He has power over wind and rain, over demons, and even over death. He could stop the earth, if He wanted. We see a glimpse of this as Jesus says, "I am He."

Jesus shows you that He is not some helpless victim. He goes to the tree because He wants to. He could resist, but He does not. He goes willingly. He allows Himself to be arrested by sinners and put on trial. He allows Himself to be mocked and ridiculed. He willingly submits to the scourging and flogging, even the crown of thorns. He willingly carries the cross to Golgotha. He willingly is nailed hand and foot.

Why? Why would Jesus allow all this to happen when He could stop it all? He does this for you. He submits to the will of the Father for you. It is the will of the Father that you be saved from your sins and Jesus accomplishes that mission through His willing obedience. He dies in your place on the tree; this is why He goes willingly.

For you Jesus suffers and dies. For you He willingly goes to the tree. For you He suffers as the Father places all your sins on Him. For you He dies. He does this out of love for you. Because He loves you He wants to die for you. He wants to save you.

So, desire that salvation. Come and receive Jesus. Come, as willingly as He died for you, to receive His death in the Divine Service. Make receiving Jesus such a high priority as Jesus made your salvation. What would deter Jesus from dying for you? What, then, should deter you from receiving Him? He has died for you and gladly offers His gifts to you.

Prayer: Father, Your Son went to the cross willingly to die for all my sins. Grant me to joyfully, willingly, receive Jesus in the Divine Service that I would be in Him eternally. In His Name. Amen.

Monday

Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret." John 18.20

Jesus spoke. His words are open and honest, intended for all to hear and receive. Perhaps not all His parables were easy to understand, but He spoke them to all. It is true that many interpreted the meaning of His miracles, but they were for all.

Jesus worked His ministry out in the open. He was among sinners continually. Crowds of people pressed in upon Him, imploring Him for mercy. He answered with word and deed. He gave healing, bread, even life. His words brought salvation to many. He came to seek and save the lost.

When the high priest questions Jesus about His disciples and teaching it seems a little backward. Jesus had been there preaching and teaching. If the high priest really cared about His teaching shouldn't he have gone to Jesus and asked? But the high priest did not care. These questions were not for his interest but to find fault with Jesus for the people. What had Jesus done wrong that they could accuse Him of?

So what of you? Do you receive Jesus' teaching as the high priest, only seeking to find fault? Do you seek Jesus only for earthly miracles and not for what He desires to give you? Would you interpret the parables all about you?

Jesus speaks plainly. The parables are about Him. His miracles show His compassion to sinners. Even His teachings reveal how much He loves sinners. He loves you. The teachings, parables, and miracles all speak to what He would do on the cross. There He laid down His life for you. He died for your sins. How much more plainly can it be said? He loves you and gave Himself for you.

Still Jesus works for you. He offers Himself to you as you drown your sins in your Baptismal grace. He speaks you clean through the Word. He gives you forgiveness as you receive His body and blood.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son to have compassion on me. I see this through His teachings and miracles. That compassion

led Him to the tree to die for me. Forgive me. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday

Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world - to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."
John 18.37

Jesus bears witness to the truth. But what is the truth? Truth is who Jesus is and what He does. All that Jesus does and says bears witness to this truth. Each parable has Jesus at the center. The truth is that He has come to save sinners. Every sermon shows the truth. Jesus has come to save. Jesus is truth, true God and true man. He has come to offer Himself for the sins of sinners.

His kingdom is not of this world. Jesus bears witness to the truth. His kingdom is an eternal one. It cannot be conquered by earthly forces nor can it be destroyed. His kingdom is everyone who listens to the truth.

All those who listen to who Jesus is and what Jesus does are in this kingdom. He is the truth. Amid the lies of the evil one that salvation is found in the sinner or the world; Jesus is truth. He speaks law to the self complacent in sin. He shows the truth of His character in the law. He is holy. He speaks truth that sinners are sinners.

Listen. Jesus bears witness to the truth. He speaks Gospel to those who know their sinfulness. He gives mercy from His great compassion. He came to give mercy. He keeps the law perfectly for sinners. He offers His life on the tree as payment for sins. He gives this salvation from sin freely. He speaks the truth of His mercy.

Only the King can give this mercy. The King lays down His life for the worst sinner. The King dies for you to pay for your sins. He gives you forgiveness through your Baptism into Him. He speaks His Word to you. He feeds you with His body and blood. This is truth. You are forgiven. You shall not die, but live. Jesus bears witness to all this for you for your forgiveness and salvation.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your mercy and compassion never end. I thank You for bearing witness to this truth through Your Son's death

and resurrection. Grant me to have confidence in all that the King has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

Wednesday

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." John 19.28

There isn't much Jesus is able to say. Crucifixion takes one's breath away, literally. Jesus had been up all night, sweat drops of blood, been scourged and crowned with thorns. He has no strength left, not even to speak.

"Save me, O God!" This is the way Psalm 69 begins. The Christ sinks down to death and this is His prayer. Throat parched and eyes growing dim, still He trusts in the Father. The Father is goodness and mercy, He must be! Why else would the Father lay the sins of sinners on His Son? Why else would the Father do this but to have mercy?

But this mercy is not for the Christ. The innocent suffers and dies so that the guilty may be forgiven. Consumed with zeal for the house of God, Christ is forsaken by all. He becomes a reproach before man and God. But still, He trusts in the Father.

On the mount of the Lord it would be provided, but not for Christ. There would be no ram caught in the thicket this time. This time the Son would die because the Father is merciful. "Let heaven and earth praise him, the sea and everything that moves in them. For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and the people shall dwell there and possess it; the offspring of his servants shall inherit it; and those who live his name shall dwell in it." (Psalm 69. 34-36)

The Father is mercy. While the Son thirsts and dies, the Father is mercy. Through the death of Jesus we see the mercy of the Father. He would not have you die, but gives His Son to save you from your sins. Jesus thirsts for you and dies for you. He pays the full price for your sins under the Father's wrath because the Father is merciful.

You need not thirst. Receive the water that wells up to eternal life, even Baptism. Receive the true bread of heaven that you would not hunger. Be forgiven, through Jesus, by your merciful Father.

Prayer: Father, You offered Your Son upon the cross for my sins. I rejoice that He thirsted and died for me. Grant me to receive Your mercy continually. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Maundy Thursday

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19.30

Amid death, Jesus speaks. He speaks so that you would understand what is going on. "It is finished." All the promises of God find their end here, at the tree. Your salvation finds its beginning and end here. Your sin is finished here. Christ's mission is completed here. It is finished.

To human eyes it looks like just a man dying on a tree. There is no supernatural sight here. Jesus looks weak and powerless. Thus, Jesus speaks for you. You can't see the Father placing all your sins on Jesus, so Jesus tells you what's happening. You can't see Jesus paying the full price for your sins under the Father's righteous wrath. You can't see the great joy of the heavenly host over all that Jesus does on the tree. So Jesus speaks, "It is finished."

It is finished. All your sins are ended on the tree. The punishment that should have been yours is no longer yours, but Jesus'. He takes your place. He pays your price. He does it all for you.

So receive what Jesus has done. He comes to you in the ways that He promises. Through Word and Sacrament you are joined to the death that Jesus died and your sins are forgiven. In Baptism your sins are drowned, they are finished. As you hear the Word of Jesus your sins are forgiven, they are finished. As you receive the Supper, you receive Jesus, your sins are finished.

Jesus speaks you clean from the tree. He joins you to His death so that you would be joined to His resurrection. You die with Him and are raised to new life with Him. His Easter victory is yours! Your sins are defeated. The devil is defeated, he is defeated for you by Jesus. Your sin, death, and the devil are finished, but your life in Jesus has just begun. He has rescued you and grants you life eternal.

Prayer: Father, You planned to send Your Son to save me from my sin and grant me life eternal. My sin is finished in Jesus. Grant me to

live in the forgiveness He gives me eternally. Grant me also to spread this great joy among all those I know that they would know all that Jesus has done for them. In His Name. Amen.

Good Friday

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). John 20.16

Amid the grief Mary feels, Jesus speaks. He speaks her name and changes her reality. She goes from the gloom of despair to knowing that Jesus is alive. How could they believe that Jesus's words were true until they saw? There must have been someone who had taken away the body of Jesus. The dead don't just rise.

Jesus did rise. His resurrection is proof of His victory on Good Friday. He rose bodily and descended into hell to proclaim victory. He was there while Mary was looking for Him at the tomb. Easter is the day of victory proclamation and Jesus announces that victory in hell and on earth.

Jesus was back on earth, proclaiming victory. The victory He won on the cross was for Mary. Her sins were forgiven there. Jesus was raised for her, as proof to Mary that her sins are forgiven. How can she not cling to the resurrected Jesus!

But Jesus was not just raised for Mary, He was raised on the third day for you also. His resurrection and empty tomb are proof that your sins were forgiven on Friday. The Father found Jesus' sacrifice acceptable and raised Him from the dead. Jesus went to hell and proclaimed victory for you. He stood in the garden, alive, for you. He lives for you still.

He still proclaims His victory for you. He speaks your name in Baptism and washes you clean, bringing His victory to you. He speaks your name in the Absolution and forgives your sins. He comes to you in the Supper and gives you His very own self. He brings His victory to you.

Come and receive His victory over sin. Cling to Him as Mary did. Hear Him and receive Him in the Divine Service, for there He is for you. His victory is yours!

Prayer: Father in heaven, You raised Your Son from death and the grave as proof that His death paid for my sins. Grant me joy knowing all that Jesus has done, bring Him to me again, that I would always cling to Jesus in Word and Sacrament. In His Name. Amen.

Holy Saturday

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." John 20.19

Could these words be right? The disciples had betrayed and denied Jesus. They had all run away in Jesus' moment of need. They had not listened to Him and slept in the garden. They had not understood the Supper or the miracles or parables. How could Jesus give them peace?

They deserved His wrath. They had been horrible to Jesus, sinning against Him. Each disciple knew how he would feel, what he would do, to those who betrayed him. There would be no peace for such sinful people! But Jesus comes among them and says, "Peace be with you."

Jesus brings peace to sinners. When and where Jesus is there is peace. Jesus teaches the disciples and us about His presence among sinners. He could, and even should, destroy sinners with His holy wrath, but Jesus comes to seek and save the lost. For the wayward and sinful disciples, Jesus comes. He was rejected by them and died on the tree for them. Jesus died to bring sinners peace.

That peace is yours in Jesus Christ. Amid your sins and sinfulness Jesus brings you peace. Do you deserve this great gift? No more than the disciples. But Jesus gives. He brings this peace in the Divine Service. There He stands among a group of sinners and gives peace. Through Baptism, Supper, and the Word this peace is given.

Seek Jesus where He is found. Know your need for Him amid your sinfulness. He comes to save you. He has laid down His life for you and was raised for you. He comes to you even now to forgive your sins. All this, not because you deserve it, but because He loves you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son to give His life for sinners. Bring Jesus to me and give me peace. Forgive my sins and

strengthen my faith that I would rely on Jesus alone for my salvation and rejoice in all He has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

Easter Sunday

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." John 20.26

Jesus showed the disciples how they are to live. They are to receive Him every first day of the week. He comes to them with the doors locked and gives peace on Easter Sunday. Eight days later, on the next Sunday, Jesus comes again to give Himself.

This is the way the Christian is to live, receiving Jesus on each Lord's Day. Jesus comes again and again through Word and Sacrament. He comes to speak the sinner clean and have table fellowship with us. He gives Himself to you for the forgiveness of your sins, that you would have peace with God. You need not be like Nathaniel or Thomas, doubting or disbelieving.

You know what Jesus has done. He speaks it to you through His Word. He offers the gifts of His passion to you through Baptism and Supper. He gives you life amid the death of your sins. He pulls you out of death and gives you life through His death. His resurrection is yours!

Speak as Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20.26) Thomas had amazing joy knowing that Jesus was alive. Even more Jesus had died for Thomas and was raised for him. Jesus' wounds were for Thomas and for you. Believe all that Jesus has done for you. Hear Him speak forgiveness to you. Hear His words that your sins are finished on the tree. Receive Him.

Jesus did all this for you so that you would believe that He is the Christ. Even more, He died for your sins and was raised for your justification. Jesus did all for you. He comes to you even now each Lord's Day to offer you Himself and the benefits of His death. Receive again and again, Jesus.

Prayer: Father, You raised Jesus from the death that I would know His sacrifice for my sins was acceptable before You. Grant me to

believe in all that Jesus has done for me as I receive Him through Word and Sacrament. In His Name. Amen.