

GOD'S WORK. OUR HANDS.

Praying about our faithful mission together

We go forward in confident hope because our hope is grounded in Christ. We finally meet one another—not in our agreements or disagreements—but at the foot of the cross, where God is faithful, where Christ is present with us, and where, by the power of the Spirit, we are one in Christ.

We offer these scriptures and prayers for your prayerful reflection on our faithful mission together. We start our reflection together where Christ always meets us, at the foot of the cross, as the church pauses on Holy Cross Day (September 14) to ponder the mystery of the cross and its victory. We move through a series of reflections toward the healing, wholeness, and power of Christ's love that we reflect on as the church remembers St. Luke, Evangelist, the week of October 18. These prayers, psalms and scripture readings are not intended to replace the regular Sunday lectionary, but are offered for reflection by groups and individuals during the week outside the Sunday assembly. All hymns listed for reflection are from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

As you reflect on these scripture texts, you, might ask:

- What is God up to in these texts? What do they say about God, us, and our world?
- How do these texts send us and equip our witness?
- Reflecting on the message of this text, what does it mean to be faithful?

Week beginning on Holy Cross Day (September 14)

1 Corinthians 1:18–24

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

John 3:13-17

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Psalm 98

- ¹Sing a new song to the LORD, who has done | marvelous things,
whose right hand and holy arm have | won the victory.
- ²O LORD, you have made | known your victory,
you have revealed your righteousness in the sight | of the nations.
- ³You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the | house of Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen the victory | of our God.
- ⁴Shout with joy to the LORD, | all you lands;
lift up your voice, re- | joice, and sing.
- ⁵Sing to the LORD | with the harp,
with the harp and the | voice of song.
- ⁶With trumpets and the sound | of the horn
shout with joy before the | king, the LORD.
- ⁷Let the sea roar, and | all that fills it,
the world and those who | dwell therein.
- ⁸Let the rivers | clap their hands,
and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD, who comes to | judge the earth.
- ⁹The LORD will judge the | world with righteousness
and the peo- | ples with equity.

Prayer for this week:

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross so that he might draw the whole world to himself. To those who look upon the cross, grant your wisdom, healing, and eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymns:

- 637 Holy God, Holy and Glorious
651 Oh, Praise the Gracious Power

Week beginning September 20

Romans 8:34-35, 38-39

Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? [. . .] For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 10:11-18

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away-- and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away

because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

Psalm 100

¹Make a joyful noise to the LORD, ¹all you lands!

²Serve the LORD with gladness; come into God's presence ¹with a song.

³Know that the LORD is God, our maker to whom ¹we belong;
we are God's people and the sheep ¹of God's pasture.

⁴Enter the gates of the LORD with thanksgiving and the ¹courts with praise;
give thanks and bless God's ¹holy name.

⁵Good indeed is the LORD, whose steadfast love is ¹everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from ¹age to age.

Prayer for this week:

O most loving Father, you want us to give thanks in all circumstances and to lay all our cares on you, knowing that you care for us. Grant that fears and anxieties in this mortal life may not hide from us the light of your immortal love shown to us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care, page 259)

Hymns:

358 Great God, Your Love Has Called Us

587, 588 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

Week beginning September 27

Ephesians 2:13-14, 21-22

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. [. . .] In him, the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

John 14:1-7

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Psalm 46

¹God is our ref-¹uge and strength,
a very present¹ help in trouble.
²Therefore we will not fear, though the¹ earth be moved,
and though the mountains shake in the depths¹ of the sea;
³though its waters¹ rage and foam,
and though the mountains tremble¹ with its tumult.
⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the cit-¹y of God,
the holy habitation of¹ the Most High.
⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall¹ not be shaken;
God shall help it at the¹ break of day.
⁶The nations rage, and the¹ kingdoms shake;
God speaks, and the earth¹ melts away.
⁷The LORD of¹ hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob¹ is our stronghold.
⁸Come now, regard the works¹ of the LORD,
what desolations God has brought up-¹ on the earth;
⁹behold the one who makes war to cease in¹ all the world;
who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the¹ shields with fire.
¹⁰"Be still, then, and know that¹ I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted¹ in the earth."
¹¹The LORD of¹ hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob¹ is our stronghold.

Prayer for this week:

Gracious Father, we pray for your holy catholic church. Fill it with all truth and peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in need, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 73)

Hymns:

530 Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather
729 The Church of Christ, in Every Age

Week beginning October 4

Colossians 3:14-17

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Psalm 91

¹You who dwell in the shelter of¹ the Most High,
 who abide in the shadow of¹ the Almighty—
²you will say to the LORD, "My refuge¹ and my stronghold,
 my God in whom I¹ put my trust."
³For God will rescue you from the snare¹ of the hunter
 and from the¹ deadly plague.
⁴God's wings will cover you, and you will find ref-¹uge beneath them;
 God's faithfulness will be your shield¹ and defense.
⁵You shall not fear any terror¹ in the night,
 nor the arrow that¹ flies by day;
⁶nor the plague that stalks¹ in the darkness,
 nor the sickness that lays¹ waste at noon.
⁷A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at¹ your right hand,
 but it will¹ not come near you.
⁸You will only have to look¹ with your eyes,
 and you will see the reward¹ of the wicked.
⁹Because you have made the¹ LORD your refuge,
 and the Most High your¹ habitation,
¹⁰no evil¹ will befall you,
 nor shall affliction come¹ near your dwelling.
¹¹For God will give the angels charge¹ over you,
 to guard you in¹ all your ways.
¹²Upon their hands they will¹ bear you up,
 lest you strike your foot a-¹gainst a stone.
¹³You will tread upon the lion¹ cub and viper;
 you will trample down the lion¹ and the serpent.
¹⁴I will deliver those who¹ cling to me;
 I will uphold them, because they¹ know my name.
¹⁵They will call me, and I will¹ answer them;
 I will be with them in trouble; I will rescue and¹ honor them.
¹⁶With long life will I¹ satisfy them,
 and show them¹ my salvation.

Prayer for this week:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For

it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen. (Attributed to St. Francis, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 87)

Hymns:

648 Beloved, God's Chosen

750 Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart

Week beginning October 11

Ephesians 4:1-6

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

John 17:15-23

“I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Psalm 121

¹I lift up my eyes ¹to the hills;
from where is my ¹help to come?
²My help comes ¹from the LORD,
the maker of heav- ¹en and earth.
³The LORD will not let your ¹foot be moved
nor will the one who watches over you ¹fall asleep.
⁴Behold, the keep- ¹er of Israel
will neither slum- ¹ber nor sleep;
⁵the LORD watches ¹over you;
the LORD is your shade at ¹your right hand;
⁶the sun will not strike ¹you by day,
nor the ¹moon by night.
The LORD will preserve you ¹from all evil
and will ¹keep your life.
⁸The LORD will watch over your going out and your ¹coming in,
from this time forth for- ¹evermore.

Prayer for this week:

In you, Father all-mighty, we have our preservation and our bliss. In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving. You are our mother, brother, and savior. In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit, is marvelous and plenteous grace. You are our clothing; for love you wrap us and embrace us. You are our maker, our lover, our keeper. Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Amen. (A prayer of Julian of Norwich, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 87)

Hymns:

576 We All Are One in Mission

656 Blest Be the Tie that Binds

Week beginning October 18 (Luke, Evangelist)**Isaiah 35:5-8**

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

Psalm 133

¹How good and how pleasant it is,

when kindred live together in unity!

²It is like fine oil upon the head, flowing down upon the beard,

upon the beard of Aaron, flowing down upon the collar of his robe.

³It is like the dew of Hermon flowing down upon the hills of Zion.

For there the LORD has commanded the blessing: life forevermore.

Or Psalm 51:1-11

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;

in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

²Wash me through and through from my wickedness,

and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my offenses,

and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;

so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.

⁵Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,

a sinner from my mother's womb.

⁶Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,

and would have me know wisdom deep within.

⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

wash me, and I shall be pur- | er than snow.
8Let me hear | joy and gladness;
that the body you have broken | may rejoice.
9Hide your face | from my sins,
and blot out | all my wickedness.
10Create in me a clean | heart, O God,
and renew a right spir- | it within me.
11Cast me not away | from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spir- | it from me.
12Restore to me the joy of | your salvation
and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit.

Luke 1:1-4, 24:44-53

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you-- that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Or

Luke 4:14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the

synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Prayer for this week:

Almighty God, you inspired your servant Luke to reveal in his gospel the love and healing power of your Son. Give your church the same love and power to heal, and to proclaim your salvation among the nations to the glory of your name, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our healer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymns:

612 Healer of Our Every Ill

219 Healer of Boundless Compassion

Attributions:

Scripture citations:

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