

# The Christian Year

*Summaries of the readings for every Sunday and  
festival of the WELS Three-Year Lectionary.*

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May 9, 1992

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3/6/92

## Introduction

### *The Christian Year*

The holy days and seasons of the Christian calendar come year after year. They bring excitement, joy, and guidance from God's Word. At the heart of the Christian year is Christ: from Advent through Lent we walk with Jesus from the manger to the cross; from Easter through Pentecost we see Jesus work through his Church. Our holy days and seasons are meaningless if we simply observe them as passive spectators, since the Christian year is really a teaching tool that helps us learn the "whole counsel of God."

The Christian year is divided into three sections: the Time of Christmas, the Time of Easter and the Time of Pentecost. The Time of Pentecost has two divisions: Time of the Church and End Time. One thing that makes our church calendar different from all others is the Season of End Time. Each of the last four Sundays of the year has its own emphasis and title, the first of which is Reformation. Ours is the only Lutheran calendar which gives this distinctively Lutheran focus its own Sunday observance.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Three-Year Series*

The three-year series of lessons is adapted from the Roman Catholic lectionary, the *Ordo Lectionum Missae*, which has been used since 1969. The aim of that lectionary was to provide more scripture while at the same time simplifying the church year calendar. Our lectionary agrees with the Roman Catholic *Ordo* about half the time. In one sixth of the readings, however, a totally different passage is substituted.<sup>2</sup>

There are a few striking features in the three-year lectionary:

The Gospel gives each Sunday its theme. A certain Gospel is assigned a governing role for an entire year. Matthew is assigned to Series A, Mark to Series B, and Luke to Series C. Selections from John are included in all three years. The Gospels are not just selections from the first four books of the New Testament, but are the words of Jesus. The Gospel sets the theme for the Sunday.

The First Lesson is usually taken from the Old Testament. During the Easter season, the First Lesson is taken from the book of Acts.

The Second Lesson is taken from the Epistles. Some selections reinforce the theme of the Sunday, especially during Advent and Lent. During Epiphany and Pentecost, the

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1. James P. Tiefel, *Focus on Worship*, Summer 1991.

2. Kurt Eggert, *Focus on Worship*, Pentecost 1974.

Second Lesson follows an Epistle all the way through. This lets the congregation hear the thoughts of a particular author in their original sequence and context. This continual reading sometimes makes it difficult to tie the Epistle closely to the Gospel or principal focus of the day.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Kurt Eggert, *Focus on Worship*, Pentecost 1974.

## Preface

*The Christian Year* is more than a book of lesson summaries. It serves as a lens that helps us see the specific focus of the readings of the worship service.

The structure of each Sunday summary is simple. The theme of the Sunday is presented first. The lesson summaries follow. The summaries are quite short, since their aim is to show how the lesson supports the theme.

This book can be used in several ways. 1) Planning worship: a pastor can quickly scan the summaries and plan services in advance. An organist can glance at the summaries to help pick out music in keeping with the Sunday's theme. 2) Preparing for worship: you can read the summaries during the week in preparation for Sunday worship. 3) Service folder: it can be printed in the service folder to help worshipers follow the flow of the service. 4) Following worship: you can read the summaries after the service and meditate further on what you heard.

The liturgical year begins with the First Sunday in Advent. The following calendar sets the liturgical cycles.

1992 C	1997 B	2002 A	2007 C	2012 B
1993 A	1998 C	2003 B	2008 A	2013 C
1994 B	1999 A	2004 C	2009 B	2014 A
1995 C	2000 B	2005 A	2010 C	2015 B
1996 A	2001 C	2006 B	2011 A	2016 C

Paul C. Stratman  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Eastertide, 1992

# THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

## Sundays and Major Festivals

### THE TIME OF CHRISTMAS

#### **Advent Season**

First Sunday in Advent  
Second Sunday in Advent  
Third Sunday in Advent  
Fourth Sunday in Advent

#### **Christmas Season**

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Christmas Eve  
Christmas Day

First Sunday after Christmas  
Second Sunday after Christmas

#### **Epiphany Season**

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

First Sunday after the Epiphany  
*The Baptism of our Lord*  
Second Sunday after the Epiphany  
Third Sunday after the Epiphany  
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany  
Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany  
Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany  
Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany  
Eighth Sunday after the Epiphany  
Last Sunday after the Epiphany  
*The Transfiguration of our Lord*

### THE TIME OF EASTER

#### **Lenten Season**

Ash Wednesday  
First Sunday in Lent  
Second Sunday in Lent  
Third Sunday in Lent  
Fourth Sunday in Lent  
Fifth Sunday in Lent

## **Holy Week**

Sixth Sunday in Lent

*Palm Sunday*

Maundy Thursday

Good Friday

## **Easter Season**

### **THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD**

Easter Dawn

Easter Day

Second Sunday of Easter

Third Sunday of Easter

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Sixth Sunday of Easter

### **THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD**

Seventh Sunday of Easter

## **THE TIME OF PENTECOST**

### **The Time of the Church**

#### **THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Day of Pentecost

First Sunday after Pentecost

*The Holy Trinity*

Second Sunday after Pentecost

Third Sunday after Pentecost

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost  
Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost  
Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost  
Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost  
Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

**End Time**

First Sunday of End Time

*Reformation Sunday*

Second Sunday of End Time

*The Last Judgment*

Third Sunday of End Time

*The Saints Triumphant*

Last Sunday of End Time

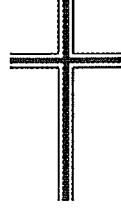
*Christ the King*

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Jim Getka and Brad Wordell who proofread the manuscripts and made suggestions for smoother and clearer wording.

Thanks also to Dan Witte, who let me use his laser printer.





## **The Christian Year – A**

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

Today we begin another church year: a year of grace, a year of repentance and renewal, a year which will bring us a step closer to our heavenly inheritance.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 2:1-5** – Isaiah pictures the Church of Jesus Christ in its New Testament fulfillment. In this new Church, people from all nations will know the God who saves them.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 13:11-14** – Paul tells us to "put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." Paul echoes Isaiah's words in the First Lesson, "Let us walk in the light of the LORD."

**GOSPEL: Matthew 24:37-44** – Jesus compares the last times on earth with the time before the flood in Noah's day. Jesus urges us to "be ready" for his sudden and unexpected coming.

### **THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

The way to belong to God's family is not by thoughtlessly keeping outward customs, but by true repentance and sincere faith in the Savior. We show our faith in the way we treat others, especially our fellow believers.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 11:1-10** – Isaiah speaks of the Savior who will come as the "shoot" from the "stump of Jesse." When the Savior comes, he will bring great peace! Isaiah pictures this peace by showing enemies like the wolf and the lamb, the calf and the lion, the cow and the bear living together in peace.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 15:4-13** – Paul encourages us to live in peace and unity with each other and to accept one another in love, regardless of outward circumstances. There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, since Jesus chose each of us to be his own.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 3:1-12** – John the Baptist prepares the way for the Savior. He preaches repentance, and people repent. John warns the Pharisees and Sadducees against only going through the motions. Their ancestry from Abraham is no reason for God to love them. It takes more than that. It takes faith in the promised Savior in whom Abraham believed.

## The Christian Year - A

### THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Who is Jesus? John the Baptist's disciples asked that same question. The person of Jesus is a mystery even to many Christians. Today we see him as Savior, Healer and Judge, the fulfillment of God's promises.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 35:1-10** – The dry wilderness bursts into bloom at the coming of the glory of the LORD. The blind see, the deaf hear and the lame walk. These miraculous changes signal Christ's Advent.

**SECOND LESSON: James 5:7-11** – James encourages us to balance our eagerness with calm and humble patience as we wait for Christ's second Advent.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11** – While John the Baptist is in prison, he sends his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the one who was to come. Jesus tells them about his healing and preaching ministry. Jesus then explained to the crowd how John's mission had been foretold by Isaiah.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The promised Savior is the Son of David and Son of God. There is nothing ordinary about his birth– "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary."

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 7:10-14** – The LORD gives King Ahaz of Judah a special sign to assure him that his enemies will not destroy Jerusalem. In false humility, Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign. God declares that he will give a sign anyway: the virgin will bear Immanuel.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 1:1-7** – According to his human nature, "Jesus is a descendant of David." Through the Spirit he is the Son of God. He showed his almighty power by his triumphant resurrection from the dead.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25** – God fulfills Isaiah's prophecy. The angel tells Joseph that Mary is with child by the Holy Spirit. The Virgin Mary gives birth to Jesus the Savior. This is more than a sign for us. It is God's grace, peace and faithfulness for the whole world.

### CHRISTMAS EVE – THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the bearer of God's grace to all, and the one who came into the world as a child in a stable.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 9:2-7** – Isaiah foretells our great deliverance. A child will be born, and his names are those of the God of divine power, peace and majesty. His kingdom will have no end. The promise of a Savior points to the birth of a **divine child**.

**SECOND LESSON: Titus 2:11-14** – God has shown his grace to all men in the saving work of Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for us." Paul not only points to the **fact of Christ's coming** but to **its wonderful meaning** for all mankind.

**GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20** – Luke tells the account of Christ's birth, from Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem to the return of the shepherds, who saw and heard God's mighty revelation. God's grace appears to all men. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

### CHRISTMAS DAY – THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Christ is born! Isaiah looks ahead 600 years and tells of the joy of Christ's coming. In Hebrews, we see his unique glory. John tells us of the Word, begotten of his Father before all worlds, who came and lived among us.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 52:7-10** – God will bring good news to his people. The people rejoice when they see what their God has done. God will show his glory to all people by sending his Son to save the world.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 1:1-9** – Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." As impressive as the angels are, Jesus is even more impressive because he is God's one and only Son.

**GOSPEL: John 1:1-14** – Jesus is not just a little baby, born in Bethlehem. He is the true Son of God, who *was even before the beginning*. He created this world. Now he takes on human flesh to save us and to make known God's love and God's salvation for all.

### THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Isaiah tells of the warmth of God's love. Paul tells what blessings belong to all who believe in Christ as their Redeemer. Matthew shows us the cold reality of how mankind rejected God's love.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 63:7-9** – God has been showing his kindness since the beginning of time. The people of Isaiah's time. We see this same kindness in the miracle of Christmas. When the LORD sees the distress of his people, he becomes our Savior and Redeemer.

**SECOND LESSON: Galatians 4:4-7** – God sent his Son to redeem both Jews and Gentiles. The believer in Christ is a son and heir in God's family.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23** – King Herod goes to horrid extremes to kill the newborn King. But God is in control. This is not yet the time for Christ's death. Scripture is fulfilled and Jesus arrives safely at his hometown of Nazareth.

### THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

We see the joy of salvation in the incarnate Son of God in Isaiah's prophecy, in Paul's prayer and thanksgiving for the believers in Ephesus, and in the opening verses of John's Gospel.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 61:10, 62:3** – Out of love for his Old and New Testament Church, God will let the glory of his salvation spring up before all nations.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18** – Paul gives thanks that the Gentile Ephesians have seen and praised God's righteousness. Now he prays that they will also see the riches they have inherited as children of God.

**GOSPEL: John 1:14-18** – We see the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, coming into the world. The final paragraph of this selection magnificently states, "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

## The Christian Year - A

### THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

The word *epiphany* means "a showing" or "a revealing." Today we see Jesus revealed as Savior of the world.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 60:1-6** – The New Testament Church will be filled with the light of Christ. The Church will be very large, filled with people from all nations.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 3:2-12** – The mystery of Christ is revealed by the Holy Spirit. The Gentiles are a part of God's forgiven family because of Jesus' work. Now God wants this mystery of Christ proclaimed through us, his Church!

**GOSPEL: Matthew 2:1-12** – The wise men visit the young Jesus, fulfilling the prophecies that Gentiles would come to Jesus and proclaim him as Savior of the world.

### THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY – THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

Today's lessons show us the meaning of the name "Christ," the Anointed one.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 42:1-7** – Isaiah prophesies the coming of the LORD's servant, the Messiah. God anointed Jesus with the Spirit from his birth. God proclaimed Jesus as his beloved Son at his baptism.

**SECOND LESSON: Acts 10:34-38** – Peter proclaims "the good news of peace through Jesus Christ," whom "God anointed... with the Holy Spirit and power."

**GOSPEL: Matthew 3:13-17** – God the Father proclaims Jesus as God the Son by the words, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." When the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, he received the Holy Spirit to help him in his ministry.

### THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Today's lessons have a missionary message: Jesus Christ is God's chosen Servant, sent to restore the tribes of Israel and to be a light to the gentiles.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 49:1-6** – This is one of Isaiah's "Servant Songs." It looks forward to the LORD's Servant, Jesus Christ. The LORD set him apart for a special purpose. He was obedient to the LORD's wishes. The LORD commissioned him to extend the kingdom.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9** – As Paul begins his letter to the congregation in Corinth, he thanks God for the grace he showed them. Paul saw this grace in their spiritual gifts.

**GOSPEL: John 1:29-41** – John the Baptist testifies about Jesus. John's testimony about Christ and about himself was clear. John's words led Andrew to talk with Jesus, and Andrew went to find his brother Simon (Peter), telling him, "We have found the Messiah."

### THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Both the First Lesson and Gospel show the changes that Christ makes in the lives of believers. Lives change from the darkness of sin to the light of the truth of God's Word.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 9:1-4** – Isaiah speaks of God's gracious promises to those who follow the ways and words of the LORD. They live in the "light."

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17** – The gospel is our most precious possession. Divisions and "cliques" are out of line with what the gospel teaches. Paul urges us not to dim the light and truth with personal squabbles within the church. Rather, we work together so the light of Christ may shine for others to see.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 4:12-23** – The ministry of John the Baptist decreased while the ministry of Jesus increased. Jesus calls his first disciples, who were among the first to see Jesus as the Light of the World.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

God's shows his love by making us grow in faith. He invites us to follow him in humble, childlike faith and reminds us that true happiness comes from knowing him and living in the light of his grace.

**FIRST LESSON: Micah 6:1-8** – God wants his light alone to guide our lives. The LORD's people were falling away. After warning his people, the LORD invites them to follow his righteousness and love.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31** – Paul points to the grace that moved God to call us into his family. He reminds us that we are not members in his family because of our goodness, but because of his grace.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 5:1-12** – In the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks to those who already know the way to heaven through faith in him. Blessed indeed are those whose God is the LORD!

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Jesus and his life are central in God's Word. Today's lessons talk about how we put God's Word to work in our lives.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 58:5-9a** – The LORD grieves over his people's attitude in worship. Their religion had become a single annual "fast." The LORD also grieves over those who "get religious" only two days a year, Christmas and Easter. God wants his Word proclaimed and lived every day.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5** – Paul builds his life and his work on Christ and his Word.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 5:13-20** – Jesus' Sermon on the Mount continues. After Jesus called his disciples "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," he reminded them that they were still not perfect. Only Christ followed every detail of the Word of God and fulfilled it.

## The Christian Year - A

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

God does not force us to obey him. We may accept or reject God's Word.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 30:15-20** – In his farewell address to the people of Israel, Moses shows the alternatives of obedience or disobedience. There is no room for 'neutrality.'

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 2:6-13** – Paul declares that the gospel is God's wisdom. He calls us to recognize our human weakness and submit to the life-giving wisdom of the gospel.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 5:21-37** – Jesus shows how God's commandments strike at our very hearts and souls. Evil thoughts and intentions are just as sinful as actions that are carried out.

### THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

God has called us to be holy. He wants us to live in line with his will and his Word, not in line with the "wisdom" of this world.

**FIRST LESSON: Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18** – God's wants us to be holy. That's as true in New Testament times as it was in the Old. The LORD wants us to show our dedication to him by the way we treat others. We must not seek revenge against our brother, but call him to repentance in love.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23** – Paul reminds us to be careful to avoid divisions in the Church, which are destructive. God's wisdom is the guide for our lives, and not the foolish "wisdom" of this world.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 5:38-48** – Our Savior tells us that revenge has no place in our lives. He tells us to love our enemies, to help them and pray for them. He wants our faith to reflect his love to others.

### THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

God reminds us that he has not forgotten us. He uses the pictures of a nursing mother and his care even for the small things of nature– the birds and the flowers. If he doesn't forget them, could he forget us?

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 49:13-18** – Here is God's beautiful promise for people who thought he forgot them. A mother may forget her child, but God could never forget his people!

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 4:1-13** – The servants of Christ have a special responsibility, and deserve special honor. Paul and his co-workers suffered because of their work with the gospel. The Corinthians did not want to share in that suffering.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 6:24-34** – God's kingdom and his righteousness are our chief concern. Jesus encourages his disciples not to worry about the things of this world such as food and clothes. God knows what we need. After all, God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers of the field.

## THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY – THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

God displays his glory through his beloved Son.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 24:12, 15-18** – Moses climbs Mt. Sinai and enters the cloud of God's glory. Years later Moses would appear with Elijah on another mountain of glory and talk with Jesus about his work of salvation.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Peter 1:16-21** – Peter remembers hearing the Father's voice from heaven on the mount of transfiguration. Peter never forgot that glorious moment. We also remember the glory we have in Christ.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 17:1-9** – We get a glimpse of Christ's glory we will one day share. Peter wanted to stay on the mountain to enjoy the glory longer. The future glory we will enjoy with Christ will far surpass all of life's greatest moments and will last forever!

## ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is a day of repentance. Outward observances and customs are fine, but they are all empty without a broken and truly repentant heart.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 59:12-20** – Isaiah confesses the sins of the nation. God is greatly displeased that there is no justice. So he works salvation for his people himself. "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins."

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2** – If we continue to live in sin, it will destroy the message of Christ's peace we bear and destroy our effectiveness as Christ's ambassadors. If we are truly Jesus' disciples, our lives will show our connection to him.

**GOSPEL: Luke 18:9-14** – Jesus tells what kind of person stands justified in the eyes of God. It is not a person like the Pharisee– who trusts in his own righteousness and good works. It is a person like the tax collector– who humbly trusts in God's mercy for sinners. He goes home justified before God.

## THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Today we see the failure of the first Adam, and the victory of Christ, the second Adam.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7** – God creates Adam and instructs him about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan tempts Adam and Eve to sin.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 5:12-19** – Paul compares the first and second Adam. The Bible heading summarizes the section, "*Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ.*"

**GOSPEL: Matthew 4:1-11** – Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness. Our Lord withstands the temptations of the father of lies. "He has been tempted in every way, just as we are– yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

## The Christian Year - A

### THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Abraham is called "the father of all believers." Today we see Abraham's steadfast faith and trust in God. "Abraham believed God, and God credited it to him as righteousness."

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 12:1-8** – God tells Abraham, "Pack up, move out!" Abraham walks from familiar Haran to unknown Canaan in faith. Abraham's life shows us strong faith, confidence and trust.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17** – Paul ties righteousness by faith to Father Abraham: physically he is the father of the Jews; spiritually he is the father of all believers. Paul shows that **faith** is the only thing that makes us right before God. God counts those who believe as righteous, those who do not believe are lost.

**GOSPEL: John 4:5-26** – The Samaritan woman draws water at the well. Although she is not a full descendant of Abraham, Jesus reaches out to her and makes her a member of the family of faith.

### THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

By nature we are spiritually blind and can only do deeds of darkness. But God sent his Son to shine on us with the light of the gospel.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 42:14-21** – The LORD scolds the wayward people of Israel and warns them of his coming judgment. In loving faithfulness, he will turn spiritual darkness into light through the Savior.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 5:8-14** – Paul reminds us of the darkness of our former way of life and the fruitless deeds it produces. Since Christ shines on us with the light of the gospel, we "live as children of light."

**GOSPEL: John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39** – On the Sabbath Day Jesus heals a man who had been born blind. The Pharisees were also blind– spiritually blind. Unlike the healed blind man, they refused to "see" Jesus as the one who gives spiritual sight.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

As we near Good Friday and Easter, we remember how sin separates us from God. Yet the Lord did not forsake us; he laid down his life that we might live.

**FIRST LESSON: Hosea 5:15 - 6:3** – The LORD allowed troubles so his people would see their need to turn to him in repentance. Hosea pleads with the people, since he knows that the LORD will not delay his help. Hosea's advice is for us too. Hear God's call and find in Christ the ransom for sin.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 8:1-10** – Paul tells of the life that God has given the world because of Christ's work. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law. By faith in him, we are free from the law of sin and death. The Holy Spirit freed us when he made us believers, alive to God in righteousness.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 20:17-28** – The mother of James and John comes to Jesus and requests special honors for her sons in the kingdom of God. Jesus reminds the disciples that even he came to serve. Being a disciple of Christ means being a servant.



### THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Sin and death rule the hearts and lives of people without Christ. Christ died to overcome the rule of sin and death. The Holy Spirit gives new life in Christ to those who are heirs of everlasting glory.

**FIRST LESSON: Ezekiel 37:1-14** – Ezekiel pictures God's people as dry, lifeless bones because of their sin against God. God promised to send the Holy Spirit to work faith in their hearts and to give them new life. He restores them as his children and return them to their inheritance.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 8:11-19** – The Holy Spirit is at work in us. As the Spirit gave life to Christ's dead body, he gives life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. The hardships of suffering with Christ in this life can not compare with the glory that awaits the children of God at the end of time.

**GOSPEL: John 11:17-27, 38-45** – Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, proving that he has power over death. He is "the resurrection and the life."

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT – PALM SUNDAY

Jesus humbly and willingly rides on to suffer and die for us.

**FIRST LESSON: Zechariah 9:9-10** – Zechariah gives the people of Judah new hope and encouragement. The people were discouraged after their captivity. Zechariah tells them of their coming Savior-King, who would appear in lowliness and humility to set up his kingdom of peace to the very "ends of the earth."

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 2:5-11** – This lesson tells of the humiliation of Christ and his final glory. Christ Jesus lowered himself and became a servant as he performed his redemptive work. God exalted him to the highest place and made him our glorious King.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 21:1-11** – Jesus rides into Jerusalem with the singing and shouting of the crowd. Yet he is riding on to die. We see the true willingness of our Lord to suffer in our place.

### MAUNDY THURSDAY

The most common name for this day, Maundy Thursday, comes from its Latin name, *Dies Mandati*, the day of the Commandment, referring to Christ's words "A new commandment I give you: Love one another," and the command in the Second Lesson, "Do this in remembrance of me."

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 12:1-14** – God gives his people instructions for the Old Covenant, the Passover, looking forward to "the new Covenant in my [Christ's] blood."

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 11:17-32** – On this anniversary of the institution of the Lord's Supper, Paul tells how "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread..."

**GOSPEL: John 13:1-17, 34** – In a beautiful act of humility, Jesus washes his disciples' feet, and encourages them to "wash one another's feet," that is, to serve each other in humility.

## The Christian Year - A

### GOOD FRIDAY

Jesus' humiliation was undeserved and voluntary. He endured it in our place. He completed the satisfaction for our sins.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12** – Isaiah describes God's exalted Servant, Jesus Christ. The LORD exalted his Servant because he humbled himself to inhuman shame to carry out God's purpose of saving sinners.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9** – The writer of Hebrews applies Isaiah's theme to the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' service as high priest is loving, sympathetic, effective and eternal.

**GOSPEL: John 19:17-30** – John records as a historical fact what Isaiah foresaw, and what the writer to the Hebrews ponders. The Servant of the LORD acted as our great High Priest by sacrificing himself once for all on Calvary's cross.

### THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD – EASTER DAWN

The stone rolled away from the empty tomb proclaim our Redeemer's victory over death.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 12:1-6** – Isaiah is happy because he can sing, "Surely it is God who saves me." He trusts in his saving God and is not afraid.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:51-57** – Paul ends his *Resurrection Chapter* with a mighty song of victory over sin and death. Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection.

**GOSPEL: John 20:1-18** – When Mary Magdalene sees the tomb empty, she gets Peter and John. They see and believe that Jesus is risen from the dead. Still startled, Mary weeps by the tomb until the Lord calls her by name, "Mary."

### THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD – EASTER DAY

We don't have to be afraid of anything because Jesus' tomb is empty. He has conquered death and has taken away the fear death brings. In today's lessons we see the miracle of the resurrection.

**FIRST LESSON: Jonah 2:2-9** – Jonah prays as he tumbles into the sea. His prayer reveals sorrow for his sin, his faith and his triumphant joy in the LORD's deliverance. Jonah knew he was as good as dead in his watery grave. He cried out to the LORD, the only one who could help.

**SECOND LESSON: Colossians 3:1-4** – Paul tells of the joyful Christian life which is a result of Jesus' resurrection. Paul invites us to think about heavenly things. He points to our death with Jesus and our coming resurrection and glory.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 28:1-10** – Matthew tells us the familiar story of Easter. First there was fear. The guards who stood by the tomb were so frightened they "became like dead men." The women who came to the tomb were afraid too. The angel put their fears to rest with the words, "Do not be afraid... he is risen just as he said."

### THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

The risen Lord is our reason for hope. Through faith in him we look beyond the troubles of this world to the glories of the next.

**FIRST LESSON:** Acts 2:14a, 22-32 – Peter reminds his fellow Jews that God acted through Jesus. His miracles, wonders and signs were God's proof that Jesus came from God and did God's work. Peter quotes Psalm 16 to show that what Jesus did was in line with the Scriptures.

**SECOND LESSON:** 1 Peter 1:3-9 – Even though we have not seen Christ or heaven, we still have a "living hope" in the Savior. His reward is ours through faith in him. Our hope keeps our faith alive though we suffer "grief in all kinds of trails."

**GOSPEL:** John 20:19-31 – Jesus appears to ten of his disciples on Easter day, and then to the Eleven a week later. He greeted them with the word, "*Shalom!*" "Peace" is our gift from God in the hope of the resurrection.

### THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Old Testament testifies to Christ's resurrection as does the New Testament.

**FIRST LESSON:** Acts 2:14a, 36-47 – This is the conclusion of Peter's Pentecost sermon. The Holy Spirit worked the miracle of repentance and faith through preaching and baptism. The early Christian's daily worship, sincerity, and concern for one another had an impact on the people of Jerusalem, as Jesus said, "All will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

**SECOND LESSON:** 1 Peter 1:17-21 – Christ Jesus was chosen, killed, resurrected, glorified, and revealed to the world. Those who believe in him share in his victory and hope of glory. Peter urges us to let our hope empower us to new living.

**GOSPEL:** Luke 24:13-35 – We meet the Emmaus disciples who forgot the testimony of the angels, women and disciples, Jesus' predictions, and Moses and the prophets. Jesus gently rebuked them and taught them again that the Christ had to die and rise.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

"Good Shepherd Sunday" reminds us of the special relationship we enjoy with our Savior. The First Lesson shows the readiness of one disciple to follow his Shepherd even to death. The Second Lesson shows how the sheep willingly suffer with him. In the gospel the sheep hear the Shepherd's voice and follow him.

**FIRST LESSON:** Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60 – Stephen dies as a martyr. His speech just before his death shows his conviction and confidence. He is killed because he confesses Christ, yet, he dies in peace.

**SECOND LESSON:** 1 Peter 2:19-25 – Though innocent, the "Shepherd of our souls" endured unjust punishment so our wounds of sin might be healed. If we suffer unjustly for the sake of the gospel, we endure it as praise to God.

**GOSPEL:** John 10:1-10 – Jesus contrasts his role as the Good Shepherd with that of thieves and robbers. While they come only to steal and kill, Jesus comes to give us life in all its fullness.

## The Christian Year - A

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The work of the Church involves everyone. Pastors have special roles, but all Christians serve as priests as they do their part as "living stones" in Christ's Church.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 17:1-15** – Paul and Silas proclaimed Jesus as the Christ who died for the sins of mankind and was raised again on the third day. In the cities of Thessalonica and Berea, they met opposition from jealous Jews. Even when they had to leave these cities, God made their work fruitful. Both Jews and Greeks believed their message.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Peter 2:4-10** – Jesus is "the living Stone." Those who believe in him are "a spiritual house." Many reject "the living Stone;" they are ripe for eternal punishment by their own fault. The believers are "like living stones," and are a holy priesthood, special to God. As priests, all Christians declare the praises of their God and Savior.

**GOSPEL: John 14:1-12** – Jesus prepares his disciples for the shock of his departure. He promises to come again and to take them to the home he would prepare for them. By faith in him they would be able to do "greater things." By their proclamation of Jesus' redeeming mission, the Holy Spirit would work the miracle of faith in the hearts of many.

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

This Sunday leads us into Ascension and Pentecost. As Jesus prepares to leave his disciples, he encourages them to be faithful and promises them the Holy Spirit.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 17:22-31** – Paul speaks to philosophers in Athens about his "new teaching." He uses the opportunity to tell them about the "unknown God." After telling them about the true God, Paul speaks of the judgment the world has brought on itself because of sin. He calls the people of Athens to repent.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Peter 3:15-22** – Peter encourages us to confess our faith whenever we can. We have a living hope– a living Savior we can share! There is no need for us to fear harm from the world because we know our living Savior is with us. We look forward to eternal life with him.

**GOSPEL: John 14:15-21** – On Maundy Thursday, Jesus promises his disciples that he will send the Holy Spirit. The Lord also comforts the disciples by promising that he will return for them.

### THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

The Ascension Festival was celebrated in the early centuries of the Christian Church. With Christmas and Easter it was considered one of the three "Festivals of our Lord's Godhead."

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 1:1-11** – Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to the apostles and commissions them as his messengers. We see Jesus go to heaven visibly, and hear the comforting message of the angels that Jesus will come again in the same way.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 1:16-23** – Paul tells us the importance of Christ's ascension. It shows God's power and the kingship of Christ over all things, especially the Church.

**GOSPEL: Luke 24:44-53** – Luke summarizes Christ's work during the forty days from Easter until the day "he was taken up to heaven."

### **THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

The Seventh Sunday of Easter is a special day on the church calendar. It is the last Sunday of the Easter season: we still hear echoes of Christ's victory shout! It is the Sunday after the Ascension: we rejoice because our Savior is ruling at his Father's right hand! This Sunday is also a bridge to Pentecost. The promise of the Holy Spirit fills us with special hope.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 1:1-14** – Jesus ascends into heaven, and his disciples return to Jerusalem where they prayerfully await the coming of the Holy Spirit.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11** – We can rejoice in hardships, since we know our Savior won a better life for us. This joy despite pain marks us as followers of our suffering Savior. Because of Christ's victory, we can be strong when faced with the devil's attacks.

**GOSPEL: John 17:1-11** – In the upper room on Maundy Thursday Jesus prays for himself and for his disciples. Jesus is our great High Priest.

### **THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

Pentecost marks the end of the Easter season. This festival celebrates the gift of the Spirit, poured out now on the Church as promised by the prophet Joel. Pentecost is considered the "birthday" of the Christian Church.

**FIRST LESSON: Joel 2:28-29** – Joel prophesies the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In these last days, God has poured out his Spirit on all people.

**SECOND LESSON: Acts 2:1-21** – Luke records the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Peter preaches a stirring sermon about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

**GOSPEL: John 16:5-11** – In the upper room on Maundy Thursday, Jesus promises his disciples that he will send the "Counselor."

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – THE HOLY TRINITY**

The LORD is one God in three Persons. We cannot begin to understand the Trinity, but we can see what he has done. We know what he is doing. We know what he will do for us and all believers.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 1:1 - 2:3** – We confess that **God the Father** Almighty is the maker of heaven and earth. This is not as though the other persons of the Trinity had nothing to do with creating the universe. The Apostle John says: "Through [**God the Son**] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3). **God the Holy Spirit** was also active at creation, "hovering" over the waters.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 12:11-14** – Paul makes it clear that his ministry really isn't his own. He even said, "I am nothing." Paul's work among the Corinthians was not to make a name for himself, but to proclaim the name of Christ.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 28:16-20** – Jesus promises his followers that he will be with them as they do the work he gives them.

## The Christian Year - A

### THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Our focus today is on the importance of faithfulness to the Word of God, in doctrine and practice.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28** – Moses urges the people of Israel to keep the Word of God in their hearts and minds, and to teach it to their children. Obedience will bring blessings in abundance; disobedience will result in a curse.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 3:21-25a, 27-28** – Paul summarizes the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. Martin Luther called the doctrine of justification "the doctrine upon which the Christian Church stands or falls."

**GOSPEL: Matthew 7:15-29** – Jesus tells us to "watch out for false prophets." Rather, build your life on the Word of God. Jesus pictures this with the parable of the wise builder, who builds his house on a rock. His house will hold up even during the worst storms. The foolish man, who builds on sand, suffers destruction in times of trouble.

### THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The LORD speaks to us about forgiveness as his gift. Through that gift he renews our hearts and makes us his faithful followers and servants.

**FIRST LESSON: Hosea 5:15 - 6:6** – Hosea shows us the LORD's eagerness to forgive. Even though God lovingly chastises us— sometimes harshly— he is still there to heal and restore us when we turn back to him. God's great love wins our hearts to love and serve him, even when we deserve his anger.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 4:18-25** – Paul shows that Abraham was justified by faith. Abraham believed God's promise of a Savior. His hopes rested in God's grace.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 9:9-13** – Jesus calls Matthew to be a disciple. Relying on Jesus, we follow and serve him in love.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

When God "saved us," he didn't simply deliver us from a life of emptiness and sin. He saved us and made us his "kingdom of priests" so we would serve him and proclaim the good news. Jesus chose his apostles to preach the Kingdom of God. We also are a people with that mission.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 19:2-8a** – The LORD appears to his people as they gather at Mt. Sinai. Before he gives them the law, he reminds them how he lovingly brought them out of their slavery in Egypt. In love he now calls the Israelites to be his covenant people.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 5:6-11** – Christ died for us while we were still sinners. We rejoice in God for this great gift of reunion through Christ.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 9:35 - 10:8** – Jesus tells his disciples about his work among the people. He sends the Twelve to go to share his love by preaching the gospel and bringing back "the lost sheep of Israel."

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Doing God's work of proclaiming his message is not easy. Sometimes people who are unwilling to hear that message cause us trouble. God still expects faithfulness, and promises to support us in his work.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 20:7-13** – Jeremiah is under attack because he proclaims God's judgment on the people. Although he would rather keep God's words to himself, he can't. God's Word is "like a burning fire" in his heart. Jeremiah finally realizes that the LORD is with him. His enemies will not win.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 5:12-15** – God's universal judgment on mankind for their sin is death. We don't need to fear death, because Christ won new life for us.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 10:24-33** – The world hates the faithful followers of God. Yet we fight the good fight of faith without fear. People can kill us, but they cannot take us with them to hell.

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

There are costs and rewards that come with discipleship.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 28:5-9** – Jeremiah has problems dealing with the false prophet, Hananiah. Faithfulness to the LORD comes first, even if it means Jeremiah must prophesy disaster for his own people.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 6:1b-11** – Jesus has won salvation for all. Through baptism we became participants in Christ's death and resurrection. We have died to sin and have risen to live a new life in Christ.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 10:34-42** – There is a cost involved in following Jesus, from the hatred of an unbelieving family to the possible loss of life itself. Even greater rewards await the faithful.

### THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

God promises to bring peace and rest after the struggles of this life.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 33:12-23** – Moses had received the promise from the LORD that an angel would continue to guide the Israelites on the way to Canaan. The LORD reassures Moses: "My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest."

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 7:15-25a** – Paul is distressed. Even though he is a believer and knows God's law, he cannot keep that law the way he wants. In this life, a Christian always falls short of perfection. Paul reminds us that our struggle against sin only ends when we are with our Savior in heaven.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 11:25-30** – Jesus extends his invitation, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." He even invites little children to bear the burden of discipleship.

## The Christian Year - A

### THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The growth we see in nature is like the growth in God's kingdom. Seeds become growing plants; plants are watered and bear fruit.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 55:10-11** – The LORD tells us that his Word brings results just like the rain from the sky. It is only natural that when plants are watered, they produce fruit. The preaching of God's Word naturally brings fruit, too.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 8:18-25** – In nature we not only see beauty and growth, but also decay and pollution. Even though there is much in creation that is beautiful, sin has spoiled its perfect beauty.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23** – Jesus tells and explains the parable of the sower. Although the seed is powerful and promising, the results are not always the same.

### THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

God is patient with the human race. His judgment will come, but not prematurely.

**FIRST LESSON: Joel 3:12-16** – Judgment Day will be like a final harvest in the grainfields and vineyards. For the godless nations, as for the impenitent in Israel, the day of the LORD will be dreadful indeed, since it will be the beginning of everlasting punishment.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 8:26-27** – The Holy Spirit will strengthen us in times of weakness until we reach our heavenly glory.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43** – Jesus tells the parable of the weeds. Instead of pulling up the weeds an enemy planted among the good wheat, the master tells the harvesters, "Let both grow together until the harvest." He doesn't want to uproot the wheat with the weeds during growth.

### THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

True wisdom comes from God. God gave Solomon wisdom to rule as a good king. Jesus' parables teach us the wisdom of God's kingdom.

**FIRST LESSON: 1 Kings 3:5-12** – God offers young Solomon whatever he wants. Solomon could have asked for personal gain, but chose wisdom to govern God's people. This pleased God, and he gave Solomon many other blessings as well.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 8:28-30** – Despite the sufferings of this life, we still have great comfort because we know that "in all things God works for the good of all who love him."

**GOSPEL: Matthew 13:44-52** – Jesus tells three parables: the hidden treasure, the priceless pearl and the net. In each parable Jesus teaches about "the kingdom of heaven." The parables of the treasure and the pearl show how precious the kingdom is. The parable of the net shows the reality of God's judgment.



### THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

God lovingly provides for all our physical and spiritual needs.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 55:1-5** – God calls those who are hungry and thirsty to come, and he will satisfy their needs. God freely offers his blessings to all.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 8:35-39** – Paul assures us that nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love God has given us in Christ. We are conquerors because of that love. Christ gives us strength to overcome all our enemies.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 14:13-21** – Jesus feeds the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. God satisfies the physical needs of his people. God gives us more than we ask—more than we need.

### THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

When we look at our personal problems we will experience nothing but discouragement, doubt, frustration. When we look to God for help, we overcome our problems and our mixed feelings.

**FIRST LESSON: 1 Kings 19:9-18** – The LORD speaks to Elijah at Mt. Horeb. Elijah ran away when Queen Jezebel tried to kill him. Elijah asks the LORD to end his life because he feels he is the only believer left. God tells Elijah that his work isn't finished, and there are still seven thousand believers in Israel.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 9:1-5** – Paul has a deep love for his own nation, the Jews. Yet their unbelief and rejection of God is painful for him because of the many great blessings they had received from God.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 14:22-33** – Jesus walks on the Sea of Galilee right after he fed the five thousand. As he comes to his disciples in the boat, Peter wants to join Jesus on the water. When fear replaces faith, he begins to sink. Jesus reaches out his hand and saves him.

### THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Our gracious Lord calls people from every nation to join his family of faith. God will never turn away anyone who comes to him for mercy.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8** – The LORD promises to reveal his righteousness not only to the Jews, but to foreigners who bind themselves to him.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 11:13-15, 29-32** – God is gracious in his dealings with the Gentiles and with the unbelieving Jews. He exposes mankind's spiritual bankruptcy so he can have mercy on them all.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 15:21-28** – A Canaanite woman holds tightly to God's Word of promise, even when Jesus stretches her faith to its limits. Her faith shows she has a place at God's table.

The Christian Year - A

**THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

God is faithful to his promises. By his grace, we believe and confess what he has revealed about our salvation.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 6:2-8** – When God had Moses tell Pharaoh to let Israel go, Pharaoh increased the workload. Moses questioned God's wisdom and complained. God answered Moses with loving reassurance. Even though Moses and Israel didn't realize it, God was hearing their cries and remembering his promises.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 11:33-36** – Paul marvels at the depth of God's wisdom and gives him all glory.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 16:13-20** – Peter could confess that Jesus was the Christ because God revealed it to him. This is also true about our knowledge of Christ.

**THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

Discipleship means learning and following. Jesus didn't come to set up a glorious earthly kingdom, but to give himself for the kingdom of God. Following Christ, we "take up our cross, and follow him."

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 15:15-21** – Jeremiah was lonely. No one liked him because he preached God's will rather than what the people wanted to hear. In his distress, Jeremiah questioned God. The LORD strengthened him so he could stand up to the troubles of his ministry.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 12:1-8** – Paul encourages us to get along, work together, and appreciate the rich fellowship we have in Jesus Christ. In this sinful world, differences are often the cause of troubles. It is not to be that way in the Church. Our differences complement each other as we make up "one body in Christ."

**GOSPEL: Matthew 16:21-26** – Jesus predicts his future suffering, death and resurrection. Peter didn't want to hear such sad things, so he began to scold Jesus for being so "negative." Jesus in turn, scolded Peter, and then reminded his followers that true discipleship often means sacrifice.

**THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

The LORD calls us to be his faithful watchmen by our words and our way of life.

**FIRST LESSON: Ezekiel 33:7-11** – God calls Ezekiel to be a watchman for the house of Israel. We have a responsibility to lead all people to their Lord and Savior.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 13:1-10** – Paul teaches the Christian's role as a citizen under an unspiritual government among unbelievers. Christians are more than God's watchmen, they are his witnesses and living examples of his love.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20** – Jesus tells us to be our brother's keeper. Jesus also tells us how to speak to our brothers and sisters who have gone astray. We are watchmen, above all, for each other!

### **THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

Our Christian love moves us to forgive those who sin against us.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 50:15-21** – When their father Jacob died, his sons were afraid because of all they had done to Joseph. Joseph assured them that he would not stand in God's place and be their judge. After all, God took the brothers' wicked action and turned it around for good, saving their lives.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 14:5-9** – There are some matters that Scripture does not specify. Paul tells us to treat each other with patience and understanding.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 18:21-35** – Jesus tells the parable of the unmerciful servant. It is a lesson in forgiveness and reminds us that God has forgiven us much. How can we not forgive those who sin against us?

### **THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

God saved us by grace alone. We rejoice in that salvation and cling to that message.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 55:6-9** – God's thoughts and ways are far different from ours. Mercy and free pardon are foreign to us, but they are essential to the gospel.

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 1:19b-27** – Paul is convinced that in life or death, Christ will glorify himself through Paul's work. He tells the Philippians and us to stand firmly as one, working together in faith.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 20:1-16** – Christ tells the parable of the workers in the vineyard. In human eyes, some appear more deserving of God's blessings than others. Yet the "reward" for each believer is the same– eternal life in heaven.

### **THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

God is fair. As a matter of fact, God is more than fair. He is gracious!

**FIRST LESSON: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32** – The Israelites were complaining that God was making them suffer for the sins their fathers committed. They were forgetting their responsibility for the trouble God had brought on the nation. God holds each person responsible for his own actions.

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 2:1-11** – Paul points to our unity in the body of Christ. As we deal with one another in the Church, we imitate Christ's humility.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 21:28-32** – It is not only God's acts of judgment which people see as being unfair. God's grace to sinners also seems unfair to those who feel no need for it. In the parable of the two sons, Jesus shows the Pharisees their own guilt in rejecting God's love. They need to repent and believe as much as the tax collectors and prostitutes.

## The Christian Year - A

### THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

God wants us to produce fruit. Our faith shows itself by fruits of faith, words and actions.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 5:1-7** – God's pictures Judah as his vineyard. God speaks of all the time and care he put into the vineyard. In spite of his labor, the result was bad fruit. The LORD removes his protection from the vineyard and it is destroyed.

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 3:12-21** – Paul encourages us to press on to take hold of the glory Christ won for us. He reminds us that "our citizenship is in heaven." Since we are citizens of heaven, our thoughts and our way of life are not earth-bound but heaven-bound.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 21:33-43** – Jesus tells the parable of the tenants to the Jews in the temple at Jerusalem. He uses the picture of the vineyard to show how God will take his kingdom away from those who reject him and give it to others.

### THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Our heavenly King has gone to great lengths to bring lasting joy and happiness into our lives. He spared no expense in preparing the feast of our salvation, not even the life of his one and only Son.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 25:6-9** – Isaiah pictures the joyous blessings of salvation as a festive banquet that the LORD has prepared for all people. A joyful song of praise follows the good news that the LORD "will swallow up death forever."

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 4:4-13** – "Rejoice in the Lord always!" Paul urges the Philippians to put into practice everything he taught them. Paul tells us the "secret of being content." Whatever the circumstances, rely on the strength God gives you.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 22:1-14** – Jesus teaches the parable of the wedding banquet. Those who refused to attend the king's banquet were destroyed. The king then sent out his servants to invite all to come, and in this way "the wedding hall was filled."

### THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Under God's hand earthly rulers can serve the best interests of God's people.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 45:1-7** – God chose the Persian king Cyrus to bring blessings to Israel. Isaiah prophesies that Cyrus will release the Jews from captivity. They will rebuild their homes and temple.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5a** – We have been chosen to receive blessings from God. As we live under his kingdom, we show our faith by works of love.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 22:15-21** – When Jesus' enemies try to trick him and get him in trouble, Jesus asks them a trick question about taxes and teaches us about our duties to government. God blesses his people today through government.

### **THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

The love of God and the love of neighbor is the theme of this service.

**FIRST LESSON: Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18** – The LORD speaks to Israel through Moses. God expects us to love our neighbor as he paraphrases two commandments, the eighth and the fifth.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 1:5b-10** – Paul gives us examples of holy living. The Holy Spirit worked faith in the Thessalonians' hearts. In the joy of that faith, Paul and his assistants served the Lord with holy lives.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 22:34-46** – Someone tests Jesus with the question of which commandment is the greatest. Jesus quotes the Old Testament demand for perfect love for God and for the neighbor. Jesus has fulfilled all God's demands for us!

### **THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

God blesses everyone with different gifts. With gifts come the responsibility to use them wisely.

**FIRST LESSON: Malachi 3:14-18** – We hear people say, "How could a loving God allow tragedies to happen? God is unfair." The answer is simple. The LORD is fair. Judgment Day will show God's fairness. No one will be able to contest the outcome of that day.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 3:7-13** – Paul refers to the zeal, love and faithfulness of the apostles who cared for God's people. A pastor's faithful preaching of the gospel will produce results in the hearts and lives of his people

**GOSPEL: Matthew 25:14-30** – The Parable of the Ten Talents shows the responsibilities that come with our blessings.

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY OF END TIME – REFORMATION SUNDAY**

Reformation is not merely a celebration of our Lutheran heritage. It is a festival of the Word. In every age, people have suffered for proclaiming God's Word.

**FIRST LESSON: Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23** – King Darius made a decree that all must worship and pray to him as the earthly representative of the gods. Daniel knew what he was going to do. He went to his private room, faced Jerusalem, and prayed "as he had done before." Even though he knew that the king might kill him because of his faith, he continued to worship the true God!

**SECOND LESSON: Galatians 5:1-6** – Freedom and the law are incompatible. Freedom is not a way which man has chosen, but the way Christ has won. No one can compromise it. To return to the way of the law to pay for our sins cancels the gospel's message of free grace and throws away Christ's saving work.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 10:16-23** – Jesus sends his disciples out to proclaim his message. He tells them what to expect: persecution, betrayal and hatred. Their suffering will not stop their work any more than it could stop Christ's work. Persecution will enable them to be "brought before governors and kings as witnesses." The Spirit will speak through them. They will endure to the end, and God will bring them home. The Son of man will come to end the persecution.

**The Christian Year - A**

**THE SECOND SUNDAY OF END TIME –  
THE LAST JUDGMENT**

Today's lessons emphasize the Christian life as we expect Christ's return.

**FIRST LESSON: Daniel 7:9-10** – This short lesson is a vision of the "Ancient of Days," as he assembles the royal court for judgment. It is a haunting, mysterious vision, full of color and majesty, fire and awe. It is a sobering reminder of the seriousness of God's judgment.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11** – Paul tells us to watch out for those who say, "Peace and safety," when the times are dangerous. In times of trouble, we arm and protect ourselves with the Word of God.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 25:31-46** – Jesus pictures the judgment as a man separating his sheep from his goats. Jesus' sheep are those who have done his will– the goats are those who have not. Jesus' judgment is not on the basis of works. The works are only the evidence of what Jesus knows is in the heart.

**THE THIRD SUNDAY OF END TIME –  
THE SAINTS TRIUMPHANT**

In the Apostles' Creed we confess, "I believe in the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints." We share a communion or fellowship with believers of all time. We thank God for the saints who have gone home. We watch and pray with those who are still with us.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 52:1-6** – Isaiah urges the people of God to "awake, clothe yourself with strength." We will be alert, so we will know the Lord when he comes.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** – This lesson brings to light the awesome resurrection miracle of the Last Day. In spite of man's views about death as THE END, "God will bring with Christ Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him."

**GOSPEL: Matthew 25:1-13** Our Lord's parable of the Ten Virgins pictures readiness and unreadiness in a pointed, dramatic way.

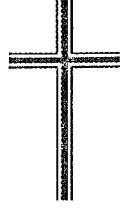
**THE LAST SUNDAY OF END TIME –  
CHRIST THE KING**

Christ is the King of heaven and earth. Sometimes he displays his kingship in ways we don't expect.

**FIRST LESSON: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 23-24** – Ezekiel prophesies about the people returning to the promised land, and about their Shepherd, the Lord's Servant, a second David. He also tells us about the end times. The prophecy will be perfectly fulfilled in the Church in heaven.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28** – The shepherd of Ezekiel's prophecy is "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep," and the one who reigns and will destroy all enemies of his Church.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 27:27-31** – Pontius Pilate's soldiers mock Jesus, spit on him and shout "Hail, king of the Jews!" They don't know the truth of what they say, for the one they mockingly call "king" is the King of all.



## **The Christian Year – B**

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

It is important for us to make good use of the time God gives us. Christ is coming soon.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 63:16b-17; 64:1-8** – Isaiah cries to the LORD to remember that he is the God of his people Israel. Isaiah asks that the LORD would come down for the sake of his servants.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9** – Paul encourages us to stand firm in this grace as we "wait for the Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed." Jesus will "be revealed" on the Last Day, when he returns in glory.

**GOSPEL: Mark 13:32-37** – Jesus urges his followers to "be on guard" and to "be alert." No one knows when this day of judgment will take place.

### **THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ by preaching repentance. We also prepare our hearts as we wait for Christ to return.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 40:1-11** - God calls Isaiah to cry out with the message: "All men are like grass, but the Word of our God stands forever." This message exposes human weakness and comforts broken sinners with God's strength. Isaiah's message is a parallel to John the Baptist's lonely voice in the wilderness.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Peter 3:8-14** – Peter describes the Lord's patience, his desire for man's repentance, and his sudden return. We don't fear his return, "we look forward to a new heaven and a new earth..."

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8** – John's rough garments and rough lifestyle were in line with his rough message. He was the second Elijah, sent to fill the ditches of despair and level the mountains of pride to make a smooth highway for the King to enter human hearts.

## The Christian Year - B

### THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Like John the Baptist, we rejoice when we share God's love with others.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 61:1-3, 10-11** – The LORD's Servant proclaims the year of the LORD's favor. He brings freedom and happiness to the Church and leads her back to a rightful priesthood in the new heavenly Zion.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24** – Paul tells us how God wants us to live. God's wants us be joyful and to grow in our faith as we wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28** – John the Baptist confesses, "I am not the Christ, but the voice of one calling in the desert." When the crowds asked how he had the authority to baptize, John answered, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Jesus is the Son of David, the royal heir who set up an eternal kingdom.

**FIRST LESSON: 2 Samuel 7:8-16** – God reminds King David that he took him from the flocks of sheep and made him a great king. God also promises that he will set up a lasting kingdom for David and the people of Israel. God tells David that he would not build a house for the LORD, but that the LORD would build a house for him.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 16:25-27** – Paul praises God, who revealed Jesus Christ as the Savior that all might believe. The gospel message is "the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, now revealed."

**GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38** – The angel Gabriel announces the birth of the Savior to Mary. The angel tells Mary that God would give her Son the throne of his father David.

### CHRISTMAS EVE – THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the bearer of God's grace to all, and the one who came into the world as a child in a stable.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 9:2-7** – Isaiah foretells our great deliverance. A child will be born, and his names are those of the God of divine power, peace and majesty. His kingdom will have no end. The promise of a Savior points to the birth of a **divine child**.

**SECOND LESSON: Titus 2:11-14** – God has shown his grace to all men in the saving work of Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for us." Paul not only points to the **fact of Christ's coming** but to its **wonderful meaning** for all mankind.

**GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20** – Luke tells the account of Christ's birth, from Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem to the return of the shepherds, who saw and heard God's mighty revelation. God's grace appears to all men. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."



### **CHRISTMAS DAY – THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD**

Christ is born! Isaiah looks ahead 600 years and tells of the joy of Christ's coming. In Hebrews, we see his unique glory. John tells us of the Word, begotten of his Father before all worlds, who came and lived among us.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 52:7-10** – God will bring good news to his people. The people rejoice when they see what their God has done. God will show his glory to all people by sending his Son to save the world.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 1:1-9** – Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." As impressive as the angels are, Jesus is even more impressive because he is God's one and only Son.

**GOSPEL: John 1:1-14** – Jesus is not just a little baby, born in Bethlehem. He is the true Son of God, who *was even before the beginning*. He created this world. Now he takes on human flesh to save us and to make known God's love and God's salvation for all.

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**

We praise God! He made us members of his family out of his great love. He also moves us to live according to his will.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 45:22-25** – God calls the world to seek salvation in him. His words are truth, and his mighty works are righteousness and salvation. In spite of the world's waywardness, the LORD says, "Turn to me and be saved."

**SECOND LESSON: Colossians 3:12-21** – Paul calls us God's chosen people, and urges us to "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus."

**GOSPEL: Luke 2:25-40** – When Joseph and Mary bring the Christ-child to the Temple, Simeon praises God for keeping his promise of sending the Savior. Anna also gives thanks to God for sending the Savior to all "who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem."

### **THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**

We see the joy of salvation in the incarnate Son of God in Isaiah's prophecy, in Paul's prayer and thanksgiving for the believers in Ephesus, and in the opening verses of John's Gospel.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 61:10, 62:3** – Out of love for his Old and New Testament Church, God will let the glory of his salvation spring up before all nations.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18** – Paul gives thanks that the Gentile Ephesians have seen and praised God's righteousness. Now he prays that they will also see the riches they have inherited as children of God.

**GOSPEL: John 1:14-18** – We see the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, coming into the world. The final paragraph of this selection magnificently states, "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

The Christian Year - B

**THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD**

The word *epiphany* means "a showing" or "a revealing." Today we see Jesus revealed as Savior of the world.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 60:1-6** – The New Testament Church will be filled with the light of Christ. The Church will be very large, filled with people from all nations.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 3:2-12** – The mystery of Christ is revealed by the Holy Spirit. The Gentiles are a part of God's forgiven family because of Jesus' work. Now God wants this mystery of Christ proclaimed through us, his Church!

**GOSPEL: Matthew 2:1-12** – The wise men visit the young Jesus, fulfilling the prophecies that Gentiles would come to Jesus and proclaim him as Savior of the world.

**THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY –  
THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD**

Today's lessons show us the meaning of the name "Christ," the Anointed one.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 49:1-6** – In one of Isaiah's *Servant Songs*, the Servant of the LORD describes his calling and his work: "to restore the tribes of Jacob," and to be "a light for the Gentiles."

**SECOND LESSON: Acts 16:25-34** – Paul and Silas baptize the family of the jailer of Philippi.

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:4-11** – This lesson tells us of a baptism like no one ever saw or will ever see again: the heavens were "torn open," and the Spirit descended like a dove on Jesus. The Father gave his Son his full testimony in a voice thundering from heaven!

**THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**

God shows himself and calls us to serve him.

**FIRST LESSON: 1 Samuel 3:1-10** – God reveals himself at an important turning point in Israel's history and calls Samuel to the prophetic office.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20** – Paul warns Christians about abusing Christian liberty in covering up their sins. Sexual sins are not within Christian liberty. We use our bodies to show we belong to Christ, and to show that the Holy Spirit lives in us.

**GOSPEL: John 1:43-51** – As Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael to follow him, he shows his divine knowledge of all things and promises even greater things of himself. The disciples respond to Christ's invitation by obeying his call and by sharing the news with others.

### **THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**

God's Word is powerful. It makes changes in the hearts and lives of those who hear it.

**FIRST LESSON: Jonah 3:1-5, 10** – The LORD calls Jonah to preach the message of repentance to the people of Nineveh. Jonah's message touches their hearts, and moves them to repentance.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31** – God calls on believers to realize that this world is temporary and to live their lives accordingly. Christians use the things of this world without losing sight of their heavenly goal.

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:14-20** – Jesus proclaims the gospel loud and clear, "Repent and believe the good news!" After this, Jesus calls Simon and Andrew to be "fishers of men." James and John also leave their nets to follow Jesus.

### **THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**

Christ's prophetic office brings us God's truth. Christ's love leads us to speak and use that truth lovingly.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 18:15-20** – Moses gives the promise of another Prophet who will be like Moses, yet greater.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13** – Our Lord wants us to be careful in our Christian freedom, so we do not offend the weak. The use of meat sacrificed to idols is something that is neither commanded nor forbidden by God. In matters of concern today, we remember not to wound weak consciences merely to show that something is permissible.

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:21-28** – This lesson shows us "the Prophet" spoken of by Moses in the First Lesson. Jesus teaches with divine authority and shows it by driving out evil spirits. Jesus reveals himself and his glory.

### **THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**

Today we look the work Christ did to spread the kingdom, and how the Church continues that work.

**FIRST LESSON: Job 7:1-7** – Job's friends suggested that he was suffering God's punishment for some specific sin. Job wasn't suffering for sin. God considered Job a "righteous man."

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23** – Paul could not boast about being an apostle; he hadn't volunteered. God called him and made him an obedient servant to build the Church of God.

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:29-39** – Shortly after his baptism, Jesus returns to Galilee, where he shows that the kingdom of God has come in might and mercy. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, as well as the sick and demon-possessed.

## The Christian Year - B

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Jesus shows himself as the Son of God through his miracles and by his compassion. Each believer works to share the good news of the Savior.

**FIRST LESSON: 2 Kings 5:1-14** – Elisha the prophet heals Naaman's leprosy. Naaman is not an Israelite, but an Aramean, an enemy of Israel. Through a young Israelite girl the LORD leads Naaman to the doorstep of Elisha, and through Elisha to himself.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27** – Paul spells out a clear, concise motto for his and every believer's life: "Run in such a way as to get the prize."

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:40-45** – Moved by compassion, Jesus touches and heals a leper. In gratitude, the healed man spreads the news about Jesus.

### THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

The forgiveness of sins and salvation are certain because of the power and grace of God.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 43:18-25** – Even though Israel is unfaithful, God showed his grace by blotting out Israel's sins. They did not deserve his favor. It was a gift of his grace.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 1:18-22** – Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises God has made. It is by God's power alone that we are his children. God sent his Holy Spirit into our hearts as a guarantee of what we shall receive.

**GOSPEL: Mark 2:1-12** – Jesus shows that he has the authority to forgive sins by healing a paralytic.

### THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Jesus is the heavenly bridegroom who brings grace and forgiveness.

**FIRST LESSON: Hosea 2:14-16, 19-20** – The LORD invites Israel to return to him. The LORD compares himself to a wronged bridegroom who is still willing to forgive his wayward bride, marry her and keep her. "Repent and return!"

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 3:1b-6** – Paul talks about the glory of the gospel ministry. We see this glory in the results of that ministry, namely, that the Corinthians were brought to faith in Christ.

**GOSPEL: Mark 2:18-22** – The Jews noticed that Jesus and his disciples did not fast like the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees. In his explanation, Jesus compares himself with a bridegroom whose very presence brings joy rather than sadness to his disciples.

**THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY –  
THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD**

At the transfiguration, God revealed Jesus in all his glory, with Moses and Elijah present.

**FIRST LESSON: 2 Kings 2:1-12b** – Elijah goes to heaven in a fiery chariot and whirlwind. Elijah's passing was glorious, as is the passing of every child of God who leaves the Church Militant for the Church Triumphant.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2** – The law came through Moses in a glorious way, but those who try to use the law as a way to get to heaven by works have missed the point. More glorious than the law is the gospel, which proclaims the way of salvation as free grace, given through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ!

**GOSPEL: Mark 9:2-9** – The appearance of Moses and Elijah with Christ gave Peter, James and John a foretaste of heaven. They wanted to keep this taste of heaven on earth.

**ASH WEDNESDAY**

Ash Wednesday is a day of repentance. Outward observances and customs are fine, but they are all empty without a broken and truly repentant heart.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 59:12-20** – Isaiah confesses the sins of the nation. God is greatly displeased that there is no justice. So he works salvation for his people himself. "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins."

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2** – If we continue to live in sin, it will destroy the message of Christ's peace we bear and destroy our effectiveness as Christ's ambassadors. If we are truly Jesus' disciples, our lives will show our connection to him.

**GOSPEL: Luke 18:9-14** – Jesus tells what kind of person stands justified in the eyes of God. It is not a person like the Pharisee– who trusts in his own righteousness and good works. It is a person like the tax collector– who humbly trusts in God's mercy for sinners. He goes home justified before God.

**THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT**

Jesus not only died in our place, he lived a perfect life as our substitute– all to win us back to himself.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 22:1-18** – God tests Abraham's faith. He commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his only son. Though prevented by God, Abraham is willing to surrender the son he loves, showing he fears God.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 8:31-39** – Since God did not spare his own Son, not even the troubles we have in this life can separate us from God's love.

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:12-15** – Christ's defeats Satan at the beginning of his public ministry. This victory is a prelude to the defeat of Satan's power on Mount Calvary.

## **The Christian Year - B**

### **THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT**

Jesus is the only way to heaven. He is our only link with the Father.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 28:10-17** – Jacob is reassured of his part in the Messianic line, and of the LORD's guidance in his life.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 5:1-11** – Jesus' redemptive work links us with God. We rejoice in the hope he won for us.

**GOSPEL: Mark 8:31-38** – Jesus reminds his followers of what must happen. When Peter tries to discourage him, Jesus points out the willingness of a true believer to listen and follow the Savior.

### **THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**

God wants to be first in our lives. The lessons also show us Christ's obedience, and assure us of the salvation we have through Christ's work.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 20:1-17** – The LORD speaks the Ten Commandments to his people Israel. Those who sin against him will be punished, while those who love and obey him will enjoy his love.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25** – The message of Christ crucified is a "stumbling block" and "foolishness" to unbelievers. "But to those whom God has chosen, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God."

**GOSPEL: John 2:13-22** – Out of love for his Father's house, Jesus cleanses the Temple at the beginning of his public ministry.

### **THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT**

Only faith in Christ crucified saves. We receive God's undeserved love through faith in Jesus' work.

**FIRST LESSON: Numbers 21:4-9** – This lesson is the account of the Israelites' rebellion and the bronze snake Moses made. Faith in God's promises was God's remedy for their troubles.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 2:4-10** – Even when we were dead in transgressions, God made us alive with Christ. Such a free gift of God moves Christian hearts to do the good works God prepared for them to do.

**GOSPEL: John 3:14-21** – Jesus compares himself to the bronze snake. He was lifted up for the sins of the world.

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

By Jesus' perfect life and sacrifice he became our High Priest, and put a new covenant into effect.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 31:31-34** – The LORD promises a new covenant for his people, a covenant of the full and free forgiveness of sins. Through this covenant the LORD would set apart a holy people who would know him fully "from the least of them to the greatest."

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 5:7-9** – Jesus was obedient to God's law and his Father's will to win salvation for us. He became our eternal High Priest so that he could give God full payment for our sins.

**GOSPEL: John 12:20-33** – Jesus' road to glory was the road to the cross. Through his suffering and death, Jesus redeemed for himself a people whom he could call his own.

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT – PALM SUNDAY

Jesus is our substitute: in his humility and in the willing, obedient way he did the work for us.

**FIRST LESSON: Zechariah 9:9-10** – Zechariah gives the people of Judah new hope and encouragement. The people were discouraged after their captivity. Zechariah tells them of their coming Savior-King, who would appear in lowliness and humility to set up his kingdom of peace to the very "ends of the earth."

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 2:5-11** – This lesson tells of the humiliation of Christ and his final glory. Christ Jesus lowered himself and became a servant as he performed his redemptive work. God exalted him to the highest place and made him our glorious King.

**GOSPEL: Mark 11:1-10** – Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey. He enters the city as a king, yet his glory is in his humility and suffering.

### MAUNDY THURSDAY

The most common name for this day, Maundy Thursday, comes from its Latin name, *Dies Mandati*, the day of the Commandment, referring to Christ's words "A new commandment I give you: Love one another," and the command, "Do this in remembrance of me."

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 12:1-14** – God gives his people instructions for the Old Covenant, the Passover, looking forward to "the new Covenant in my [Christ's] blood."

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17** – Paul draws our attention to the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus in Holy Communion. We enjoy close fellowship with the Lord in the company of those Christians with whom we share a common confession of faith.

**GOSPEL: Mark 14:12-26** – Jesus and his disciples celebrate their last Passover together. Jesus then replaces the Passover with the Lord's Supper. By this Sacrament we receive that which purchased our redemption– the body and blood of the Lord. It is given to us as the seal of the New Covenant. This sacred meal is also a foretaste of the feast the saints will enjoy with Jesus in heaven.

## The Christian Year - B

### GOOD FRIDAY

Jesus' humiliation was undeserved and voluntary. He endured it in our place. He completed the satisfaction for our sins.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12** – Isaiah describes God's exalted Servant, Jesus Christ. The LORD exalted his Servant because he humbled himself to inhuman shame to carry out God's purpose of saving sinners.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9** – The writer of Hebrews applies Isaiah's theme to the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' service as high priest is loving, sympathetic, effective and eternal.

**GOSPEL: John 19:17-30** – John records as a historical fact what Isaiah foresaw, and what the writer to the Hebrews ponders. The Servant of the LORD acted as our great High Priest by sacrificing himself once for all on Calvary's cross.

### THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD – EASTER DAWN

The stone rolled away from the empty tomb proclaim our Redeemer's victory over death.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 12:1-6** – Isaiah is happy because he can sing, "Surely it is God who saves me." He trusts in his saving God and is not afraid.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:51-57** – Paul ends his *Resurrection Chapter* with a mighty song of victory over sin and death. Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection.

**GOSPEL: John 20:1-18** – When Mary Magdalene sees the tomb empty, she gets Peter and John. They see and believe that Jesus is risen from the dead. Still startled, Mary weeps by the tomb until the Lord calls her by name, "Mary."

### THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD – EASTER DAY

Our Lord's Resurrection is the end of the struggles and suffering of Christ, and the beginning of new life for all believers.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 25:6-9** – We see the banquet of salvation the LORD has prepared. Nothing is missing, and God has taken everything away that would ruin the joy of his people - the veil of death, tears and disgrace.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26** – Our hope in Christ is not just for this life. Christ has been raised from the dead, and so our hope in Christ is sure. He lives, and so will we!

**GOSPEL: Mark 16:1-8** – The women go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. The sight of an empty tomb and a holy messenger is a shock at first! But the angel has a wonderful message, "He is not here, he is risen!" Instead of death claiming another victim, death has been swallowed up in victory!



### THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Our faith is based on Jesus, our risen Lord.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 3:1-16** – Peter heals a crippled beggar, and proclaims the power of Christ. Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him gives complete healing.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 John 5:1-6** – Those who believe "that Jesus is the Son of God" share in his victory. As a fruit of faith they who are "born of God" are able to "obey his commands" and have "overcome the world."

**GOSPEL: John 20:19-31** – Jesus appears to his disciples on Easter evening and a week later when Thomas is present. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles are to declare forgiveness of sins in Christ's name, inviting people to repent so they may enter the Kingdom of God.

### THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Christ's work is completed. It is our privilege to share this truth with the world.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 4:8-12** – Peter tells the Jewish high council that Jesus lives and reigns as the Savior of all people. Peter quotes the prophecy in Psalm 118, which speaks of Christ as the stone that the builders rejected, who has become the capstone.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2** – John speaks of the "Word of life," who showed himself as the light of the world, that we who believe in his sacrifice may not walk in the darkness of sin, but may have the light of eternal life in him.

**GOSPEL: Luke 24:36-49** – Our risen Lord appears to the disciples. He tells them that this suffering and rising from the dead is the fulfillment of God's plan foretold in the Old Testament scriptures.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Good Shepherd Sunday focuses on God's great shepherding love.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 4:23-33** – When the church in Jerusalem heard that Peter and John were ordered not to preach Christ, they prayed that God would give his apostles the boldness to speak the Word to the world, even in the face of danger.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 John 3:1-2** – John declares the marvelous love of God that made us his children. We cannot expect the world to recognize this, because it does not know God. But we are God's children, and when the Lord comes again, everyone will know that we are God's children.

**GOSPEL: John 10:11-18** – Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd in contrast to the hired hands, who abandon the sheep when danger threatens.

## The Christian Year - B

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Faith believes God's Word, and puts that Word to work every day.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 8:26-40** – Philip shared the message of the Lord's victory with the Ethiopian eunuch. Sharing Christ with others is an important fruit of faith!

**SECOND LESSON: 1 John 3:18-24** – John speaks about special love from God. This love shows itself in our lives. Even though our lack of growth might cause us to doubt our faith, God comes to our rescue. In his Word he assures us that Christ has delivered us from sin. This assurance helps us put our faith to work in our lives.

**GOSPEL: John 15:1-8** – The evidence of faith in Christ is deeds of love. God looks for these fruits in our lives. Without faith in Christ, no one can produce fruits pleasing to God. One fruit of faith is prayer. Whatever we ask for in faith is granted.

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Savior's great love for us is the guiding principle in our lives. This love unites us as we share the blessings of God's Word.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 11:19-30** – The Word of the Lord spreads after the first great persecution in Jerusalem. This lesson tells about the development of the church in Antioch, Syria, and how these Christians helped their fellow believers in Jerusalem in a time of famine.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 John 4:1-11** – John urges us to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God." The Spirit of God can be recognized in those who acknowledge that "Jesus Christ has come into the flesh." John also tells us to love one another, since God loved us by sending his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

**GOSPEL: John 15:9-17** – Jesus tells us to put our faith into action, that is, to love one another.

### THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

The Ascension Festival was celebrated in the early centuries of the Christian Church. With Christmas and Easter it was considered one of the three "Festivals of our Lord's Godhead."

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 1:1-11** – Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to the apostles and commissions them as his messengers. We see Jesus go to heaven visibly, and hear the comforting message of the angels that Jesus will come again in the same way.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 1:16-23** – Paul tells us the importance of Christ's ascension. It shows God's power and the kingship of Christ over all things, especially the Church.

**GOSPEL: Luke 24:44-53** – Luke summarizes Christ's work during the forty days from Easter until the day "he was taken up to heaven."

### **THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Our ascended Lord is in heaven, where he sits at the Father's right hand and prays for his Church.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 1:15-26** – The eleven disciples select a replacement for Judas. By presenting themselves as a full company of twelve they prepare for their work as witnesses of the resurrection.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 John 4:13-21** – John discusses God's love and ours. We bear witness to, rely on, and live in the God who is love. It is only right that we love one another. If we don't love one another, we do not love God nor truly show his love for us.

**GOSPEL: John 17:11b-19** – Our High Priest prays for his disciples as he looks ahead to the time when he will no longer be with them. He prays that the Father would protect them, sanctify them and keep them. The tool by which he will do this is the Word.

### **THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

Pentecost marks the end of the Easter season. This festival celebrates the presence of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is considered the "birthday" of the Christian Church.

**FIRST LESSON: Ezekiel 37:1-14** – The LORD asks Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Without God's Spirit, though there may be physical life, there can be no spiritual life. And without spiritual life, what is life but only dry bones!

**SECOND LESSON: Acts 2:1-21** – Luke records the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Peter preaches a stirring sermon about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

**GOSPEL: John 14:25-27** – Jesus tells the disciples not to be afraid, because he will send the Holy Spirit, the Counselor.

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – THE HOLY TRINITY**

The LORD is one God in three Persons.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 6:4-9** – As Moses prepared to leave the Israelites, he proclaimed that God is one. As the Israelites were about to enter Canaan, a land filled with false gods, they needed a reminder that there is only one God.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 8:14-17** – God is three persons. This lesson refers to each person of the Trinity: the Father to whom we cry, "Abba, Father," the Son with whom we are "co-heirs," and the Spirit "who testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

**GOSPEL: John 3:1-17** – Each person of the Godhead takes part in our redemption. The Father loved and gave. The Son was lifted on the cross. The Spirit gives us new birth in our lives of faith.

## THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

True worship is not a matter of fulfilling certain requirements or saying the right words.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 5:12-15** – This is the restatement of the Third Commandment as God gives the law a second time at the end of Israel's journey. God wants his people to worship him and keep the proper relationship with him.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 4:5-12** – The good news of Christ is a light to brighten our sin-darkened hearts, a treasure contained in the fragile clay of human ministers, and the motivation for Christians to endure suffering.

**GOSPEL: Mark 2:23-28** – As Jesus and his disciples walk through the grain fields, Jesus talks about the true keeping of the Sabbath. "The Sabbath was made for man," that is, it was given to help man devote himself to the "Lord of the Sabbath," and not to burden man with loveless regulations.

## THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jesus is the promised seed of the woman who has crushed Satan's power.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 3:8-15** – Following the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden, God calls them to account for their sin. He also lovingly promises a Savior who will pay their account for them. Although they have been overcome by Satan, the Seed of the woman will come and crush the one who crushed them.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 4:13-18** – Outwardly "we are wasting away" under Satan's constant attacks; but, "inwardly we are being renewed day by day." Even though life is filled with hardships, we have the victory. Jesus Christ has guaranteed it!

**GOSPEL: Mark 3:20-35** – Jesus' victories over the demons are denounced by the teachers of the law as works done by the power of the "prince of devils." Jesus exposes their silliness. Such a battle plan would result in the self-destruction of Satan's kingdom. Jesus testifies that his victories over the forces of evil are due to his superior power.

## THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

God's kingdom grows outwardly– in the number of souls in his Church, and inwardly– in the hearts of every believer.

**FIRST LESSON: Ezekiel 17:22-24** – God threatened to destroy the proud house of David since the Jews were making an alliance with the Egyptians and the Babylonians. They were rebelling against God's will. The LORD would snap the Messianic shoot from the proud cedar of David's line and establish the New Testament kingdom. In spite of Judah's rebellion the LORD's kingdom would come and his will would be done.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10** – Paul compares our earthly life to living in a tent. It is temporary. We who believe in Christ "live by faith, not by sight." We look forward to leaving this "tent life" on earth and dwelling "at home with the LORD." It is not a death wish, but a desire for glory.

**GOSPEL: Mark 4:26-34** – Christ tells the parables of the growing seed and the mustard seed. Without the least effort on our part, the Word grows in the hearer and accomplishes what God pleases. The second parable shows the extent of the kingdom of God. It has humble beginnings but grows into a tree large enough for people throughout the world to enjoy its saving protection.

### **THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

God's almighty power governs all things in this world. We may not understand his ways, but we can know and trust that in all things he works for the good of those who love him.

**FIRST LESSON: Job 38:1-11** – God speaks to Job concerning Job's afflictions and their cause. God humbles Job by asking him to compare God's eternity with Job's short life, God's omniscience with his own ignorance, and God's strength with his own weakness.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21** – Paul based his entire ministry on the love of Christ, who died for all that all might live for him.

**GOSPEL: Mark 4:35-41** – Jesus shows his divine power over nature by calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee to strengthen the disciples' faith and ours.

### **THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

The LORD's mercy and unfailing compassion sustain us, even though we be homeless, penniless, or grieved.

**FIRST LESSON: Lamentations 3:22-33** – The prophet recalls the silver lining in the clouds of afflictions. No matter how great our suffering and sadness, we can still rejoice. The LORD's "compassions never fail. They are new every morning."

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-14** – Paul holds up two shining examples of selfless generosity. The Macedonians were generous with their gifts, even though they were extremely poor. Paul also points to the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave all that we might have the riches of heaven.

**GOSPEL: Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43** – Jesus raises the daughter of Jairus from the dead. The Lord of life and death showed his life-giving power.

### **THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

God wants pastors to speak his Word. He wants us to listen to the Word and respect his messengers.

**FIRST LESSON: Ezekiel 2:1-5** – The LORD commissions Ezekiel to speak to stubborn Israel. Whether the people would listen or not, they would know that a prophet had been sent to them.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10** – Paul tells about his thorn in the flesh, given to keep him from pride and set his attention on God's grace. God wanted his strength, not Paul's, to shine in his apostle.

**GOSPEL: Mark 6:1-6** – When Jesus spoke to the crowd in Nazareth, where he grew up, he said that a prophet is respected everywhere but his hometown.

## The Christian Year - B

### THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

From his Church, God calls qualified men to go to proclaim his law and gospel.

**FIRST LESSON: Amos 7:10-15** – The prophet Amos defends himself against accusations of stirring the people against the king and the country. Amos did not choose to be a prophet, nor to prophesy. Rather, it was the LORD who called him and told him what to say. At times, as Amos experienced, that message is neither welcomed nor accepted.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 1:3-14** – Paul reminds us that God has called his saints to be his own from eternity. Since he has made us his own here on earth by the work of the Holy Spirit, he has assured us and all believers of our future destiny by giving us a pledge: the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

**GOSPEL: Mark 6:7-13** – Jesus sends the apostles to preach, teach and heal. He called them, gave them authority, and told them what to say.

### THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jesus is the true Shepherd who teaches his flock about God's peace.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 23:1-6** – God promised to remove the evil shepherds of Israel and to replace them with new shepherds who would truly care for the people.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 2:13-22** – God has made both Jew and Gentile his own through the perfect life and death of Jesus Christ. Together now, both Jew and Gentile are part of the temple of God, founded on Jesus Christ.

**GOSPEL: Mark 6:30-34** – The Twelve return to Jesus after preaching in the country. When the disciples report to him, he suggests that they get some rest. But the crowds follow them. Jesus pities the people because they are like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus teaches them and shows that he is their Shepherd.

### THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jesus is the Prophet, promised in ancient times, who feeds his people and atones for their sins.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 24:3-11** – Moses serves as mediator between God and the people. He proclaims to the people "all the LORD's words and laws." He sprinkles half the blood of the sacrificial animals on the altar and the other half on the people, reminding them that there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16** – Paul calls on us to live according to God's commandments. God sends his spokesmen (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers) to help us grow in knowledge, in faith and in our Christian lives, so that the whole Church may accomplish the work that our Lord places before us.

**GOSPEL: John 6:1-15** – Jesus' miraculous feeding of the 5,000 convinces many that he is "the Prophet who is to come into the world." Yet many fail to understand his message of repentance, forgiveness and salvation by God's grace alone. Jesus is the ultimate spokesman for his Father on earth.

### THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jesus is the Bread of Life. When he teaches us God's Word, he feeds us with himself.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 16:2-15** – The LORD provided the Israelites with manna and quail during their journey in the wilderness. God continued to feed his people this way for the next forty years of Israel's journey to the Promised Land of Canaan.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 4:17-24** – Paul encourages Gentile Christians to live as children of light, putting on "the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

**GOSPEL: John 6:24-35** – After Jesus feeds the five thousand, the crowd tried to make Jesus their "Bread King." When they want more bread, Jesus declares, "I am the bread of life." As the real Bread of Life, Jesus compares himself with the bread the Israelites ate in the desert. They ate manna, yet they died. Those who would eat of the living bread Jesus offered will never go hungry but would receive everlasting life.

### THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

God provides for our spiritual well being.

**FIRST LESSON: 1 Kings 19:4-8** – After his victory over the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel, Elijah flees from Ahab and Jezebel to Mt. Horeb. The LORD provided for him when he was depressed about his work.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 4:30-5:2** – Paul warns against grieving the Holy Spirit, and gives us advice for godly living. "Be imitators of God as dearly loved children." This applies to marriage and family life, personal and social relationships and congregational life.

**GOSPEL: John 6:41-51** – The people complain because Jesus failed to fulfill their expectations of the Messiah. Jesus, however, reaffirms his deity, and explains that he is the "bread of life." He is the spiritual food for the whole world.

### THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

True wisdom is found only in the Word of God, and in God's Son, Jesus Christ.

**FIRST LESSON: Proverbs 9:1-6** – Wisdom is portrayed as a person, who prepares and invites us to a banquet which will give us understanding and eternal life.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 5:15-20** – Paul encourages us to follow the way of wisdom. He points out the foolishness of the "banquet" offered by the world's wisdom, and the joy that comes from following true wisdom.

**GOSPEL: John 6:51-58** – The banquet of God's wisdom is eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus our Savior. This lesson is not a reference to Holy Communion, but a picture of faith taking part of everything our Savior is.

## The Christian Year - B

### THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Today's lessons speak about loyalty to God.

**FIRST LESSON: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18** – Israel has moved into the Promised Land under Joshua. Shortly before his death, Joshua calls his people together to renew their covenant with the LORD. He reminds them of the LORD's gracious acts throughout their history, and urges them to renew their commitment to the LORD.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 5:21-31** – Paul builds the relationship of a husband and wife on that of Christ and the Church. As Christ is the head of the Church, a husband is head of his wife. Therefore, a wife is subject to her husband in much the same way that the Church is subject to Christ. The wife will willingly submit to her husband because he loves her as his own body as Christ loved the Church.

**GOSPEL: John 6:60-69** – Many of Jesus' followers didn't want to accept what Jesus said about his divine origin and the "eating" of him for eternal life. Even though Jesus explains what he means, many desert him. Jesus asks the Twelve if they, too, will leave. Peter answers with a bold confession.

### THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Bible is the center of the Christian's life.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8** – Although the Israelites could not earn God's blessings, they could forfeit them by unbelief. If they wanted to enjoy God's blessings, they had to make God's command and promise their only guide for faith and conduct.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 6:10-20** – Paul tells us to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" and "to put on the full armor of God." He speaks of our spiritual warfare and need for God's Word.

**GOSPEL: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23** – The traditions of the teachers of the law were attempts to support the law. But God's Word does not stand in need of human assistance. When people try to add their own holiness to the Word of God, they eliminate God's Word and replace it with their own.

### THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isaiah's prophecy of "the eyes of the blind being opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped" really happened when Jesus healed people, and it still happens today, when God gives us his gifts and opens the eyes and ears of faith.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 35:4-7a** – The prophet reassured the faithful in Israel that the LORD would not forsake or forget his people. He would avenge all the wrongs done to them. He would also bring about a spiritual revival. Isaiah's words, of course, pointed to the coming of the Messiah.

**SECOND LESSON: James 1:17-27** – James tells us how to receive God's "good and perfect gifts" by being "quick to listen, slow to speak." Motivated by God's gracious gifts, our lives and words will be filled with love for others.

**GOSPEL: Mark 7:31-37** – Jesus heals a deaf man. Christ's power is clearly seen. The First Lesson and the Gospel are prophecy and fulfillment. "The ears of the deaf" were "unstopped" physically and spiritually.



### THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Believers in Jesus Christ will boldly confess their Savior.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 50:4-10** – The Servant of the LORD speaks about his suffering and his victory.

**SECOND LESSON: James 2:1-5, 8-10, 14-18** – Favoritism or exclusivism has no place in the Church. We share Christ with all people, not just those we like. This passage contains James' famous declaration: "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

**GOSPEL: Mark 8:27-35** – Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. But Peter was wrong for rebuking Jesus when he spoke of his suffering and death. Our redemption was possible only through Jesus' suffering.

### THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Greatness comes from humble trust in God.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 11:18-20** – The LORD reveals a plot against Jeremiah. Because of his trust in God, Jeremiah did not sense that he was in danger. He did not change his plans or his message, but continued to proclaim the LORD's message.

**SECOND LESSON: James 3:13-18** – James contrasts the ways of the world with the ways of God. In one powerful statement after another James makes it very clear: "Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?"

**GOSPEL: Mark 9:30-37** – Jesus foretells his coming death and resurrection a second time. The disciples do not understand. They ignore Jesus' prediction and argue about which of them is the greatest. Jesus teaches them the meaning of true greatness in the kingdom of God by showing them a child.

### THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

There is no need to be jealous of other people who do God's work. Christian love leads us to rejoice that they too share in spreading God's kingdom.

**FIRST LESSON: Numbers 11:16, 24-29** – Moses appoints seventy elders to help him lead the people of Israel. Joshua becomes jealous of two of the elders who he believes are trying to take Moses' place. Moses corrects Joshua by telling him, "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

**SECOND LESSON: James 4:7-12 (4:7-5:6)** – James tells us to submit to God and resist the devil. How much more blessed it is to live in humble submission to God and love one another.

**GOSPEL: Mark 9:38-50** – The disciples stopped a man who was driving out demons in Jesus' name because he was not one of the Twelve. Jesus scolds his disciples for their jealousy. He also warns against leading others astray and against sins that lead to destruction. He encourages his disciples to "be at peace with each other."

### THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

God intends marriage to be a lifelong union of one man and one woman, committed in love to each other. Since sin has infected and corrupted marriage and family relationships, it is important to keep the Savior at the heart of every home.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 2:18-24** – God establishes marriage in the Garden of Eden. Marriage is a blessing from our loving Creator, who ordained it for the good of mankind. Man is to live within the rules God has established for marriage.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 2:9-11** – Christ took upon himself our flesh and blood, becoming part of the family of mankind. He suffered and endured death for everyone, making us holy by his perfect sacrifice.

**GOSPEL: Mark 10:2-16** – Jesus speaks about marriage and the family. Marriage is designed to be a permanent union between one man and one woman. A Christian marriage and Christian family are the best ways to bring children to Christ.

### THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

We show our love for God when we love our neighbor. One way we can show our love for God is by providing food and clothing for the poor.

**FIRST LESSON: Amos 5:6-7, 10-15** – God warns the people of Israel about their materialism and their lack of concern for the poor. Unless they turn from their sins, and embrace him in humble faith he will consume them with a fire that cannot be put out.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 3:1-6** – Jesus was faithful in carrying out his Father's mission, just as Moses faithfully fulfilled his God-given responsibilities. But Jesus is worthy of greater honor than Moses because Moses was only a servant in God's house. Jesus is the head of that house, the Church.

**GOSPEL: Mark 10:17-27** – A rich young man asks Jesus, "What must I do to be saved?" Jesus answer is "Sell everything you have and give to the poor." In other words, Jesus is saying, "Set your money aside and put me first."

### THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jesus won our salvation by his selfless humble service to his Father's will.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 53:10-12** – The humiliation of the Servant of the LORD won our salvation. After Jesus suffered, God gave him a portion among the great.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 4:9-16** – Here the writer speaks of the Sabbath-rest for the people of God, the power of God's living and active Word, and Jesus our great high priest.

**GOSPEL: Mark 10:35-45** – James and John ask Jesus, "Let one of us sit at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory." Jesus' answer is not what they expect. He makes it clear that humble service is what makes a disciple great. Just as Jesus came not to be served but to serve, so we disciples do not seek to be lords over one another. Jesus' humble service to us draws forth our humble service to one another.

### THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jesus came to reunite us with the Father. With the blind man we cry, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 31:7-9** – The LORD promises that he will save a remnant and bring them back from captivity. Nothing will hinder God's will to call his people. Through faith they will be God's people and he will be their Father.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 5:1-10** – We see our great high priest, "a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." Though the eternal Son of God, he humbled himself and suffered. Now he is "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him," all believers.

**GOSPEL: Mark 10:46-52** – As Jesus passed by, blind Bartimaeus called to him for help. Jesus pointed to his faith and to the healing as a reward of that faith.

### THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The law can never save because no one can keep it perfectly.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 6:1-9** – Moses encourages the people of Israel to remain faithful to the LORD. God kept his promise of a land flowing with milk and honey. In loving response they are to devote themselves heart, soul and strength to keeping his commandments.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 7:23-28** – As our great High Priest, Jesus is superior to the human priests who foreshadowed him.

**GOSPEL: Mark 12:28-34** – A teacher of the law asked Jesus which commandment is most important. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:4,5. When the teacher realizes the truth of Jesus' statement, he was "not far from the kingdom of God." The best any law can do is show us our need for the Savior.

### THE FIRST SUNDAY OF END TIME – REFORMATION SUNDAY

Reformation is not merely a celebration of our Lutheran heritage. It is a festival of the Word.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 18:1-11** – Jeremiah visits a potter's shop and sees the potter make a misshapen pot. The potter re-formed the clay and made another pot. God uses this as a picture of what he would do with Israel.

**SECOND LESSON: Revelation 14:6-7** – In these verses John reminds the church of the Savior's promise that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached to the end of time. In spite of the efforts of the devil and the unbelieving world to silence the Word, the angel proclaiming the gospel will keep "flying in midair."

**GOSPEL: Mark 13:5-11** – Jesus prepared his disciples for what they would face very soon. He told them how painful their sufferings would be. But through their preaching, and the suffering that went with it, others would be brought to know the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Christian Year - B

**THE SECOND SUNDAY OF END TIME –  
THE LAST JUDGMENT**

Today we look at the Christian life as we await Christ's return.

**FIRST LESSON: Malachi 4:1-2a** – Malachi foretells the destruction of this world by fire and the coming of the "sun of righteousness... with healing in his wings." That "sun of righteousness" is Christ, the Savior.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 9:24-28** – Just as people die once, and after that face judgment, so Christ offered himself once for the sins of the world.

**GOSPEL: John 5:19-24** – Jesus tells about his position with the Father. The Father put all things in the hands of the Son of Man, even the power to raise the dead and judge the world.

**THE THIRD SUNDAY OF END TIME –  
THE SAINTS TRIUMPHANT**

We share a communion or fellowship with believers of all time. We thank God for the saints who have gone home. We watch and pray with those who are still with us.

**FIRST LESSON: Daniel 12:1-3** – Out of great distress will come the deliverance of "everyone whose name is found written in the book" at the resurrection of the dead.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 10:11-18** – Here the holy writer proclaims the victory of our great High Priest over his enemies. Following his perfect sacrifice for sin he is now ruling supreme "at the right hand of God."

**GOSPEL: John 5:25-29** – Jesus "is coming and has now come." He will give life at the resurrection and he gives spiritual life now. Jesus also tells about the uniting of the saints above with the saints below at the resurrection when "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live."

**THE LAST SUNDAY OF END TIME –  
CHRIST THE KING**

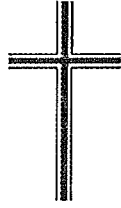
Christ is the King of heaven and earth. Sometimes he displays his kingship in ways we don't expect.

**FIRST LESSON: Daniel 7:13-14** – Daniel sees Christ as a King. Daniel saw one "like a son of man," yet "coming with the clouds of heaven." This King rules an everlasting kingdom that will not pass away.

**SECOND LESSON: Revelation 1:4b-8** – John reveals Christ as the eternal, almighty, loving king who will return.

**GOSPEL: John 18:33-37** – Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate and makes no claims to an earthly kingdom. "My kingdom is not of this world." Jesus rules in the hearts of every Christian.

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## The Christian Year – C

### THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Advent prepares us for the message of Christ's birth. God kept all his promises about the Savior's first coming. We can be sure that he will also keep the promises about the Savior's second coming.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 33:14-16** – Jeremiah foretells the Savior's first coming. Christ is the "righteous branch" who would sprout from the family of David. The promised Messiah will surely come.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13** – Paul encourages us to live blameless lives as we prepare for Christ's return.

**GOSPEL: Luke 21:25-36** – Jesus tells of the signs which will precede his second coming. He describes it as a powerful and glorious event. He tells us to be strong as we wait for his second coming.

### THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

God sends his faithful messengers who proclaim his holy Word.

**FIRST LESSON: Malachi 3:1-4** – Through Malachi, God proclaims that he will send a "messenger" to "prepare the way" for the Lord.

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 1:3-11** – Paul is concerned that the people in his care remain faithful until Christ comes again.

**GOSPEL: Luke 3:1-6** – God sends John the Baptist to prepare the way for his Son. John carried out his work of preparation by preaching and baptizing for the forgiveness of sins.

## The Christian Year - C

### THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Savior brings new life and new strength. "Rejoice... the Lord is near."

**FIRST LESSON: Zephaniah 3:14-17** – Zephaniah proclaims salvation, promising joy and restoration to Jerusalem. He urges God's faithful people to "be glad and rejoice."

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 4:4-7** – Paul brings God's message of joy and peace. We can rejoice always because "the Lord is near." Such joy shows itself by setting aside the cares of the world and turning to God in prayer.

**GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18** – John the Baptist urges the people to repent and believe in the forgiveness of their sins. John points to Jesus, the true Deliverer.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

With joy and thanksgiving, we look forward to Christmas Day.

**FIRST LESSON: Micah 5:2-5a** – Micah tells the place of the promised Messiah's birth. He also describes his work as a shepherd.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 10:5-10** – Jesus became human so he could take away the sins of all people. Without Christmas there could be no Good Friday!

**GOSPEL: Luke 1:39-55** – Luke shows how faithful women like Mary and Elizabeth clearly understood God's Word in the Old Testament about the sending of his Son.

### CHRISTMAS EVE – THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the bearer of God's grace to all, and the one who came into the world as a child in a stable.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 9:2-7** – Isaiah foretells our great deliverance. A child will be born, and his names are those of the God of divine power, peace and majesty. His kingdom will have no end. The promise of a Savior points to the birth of a **divine child**.

**SECOND LESSON: Titus 2:11-14** – God has shown his grace to all men in the saving work of Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for us." Paul not only points to the **fact of Christ's coming** but to its **wonderful meaning** for all mankind.

**GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20** – Luke tells the account of Christ's birth, from Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem to the return of the shepherds, who saw and heard God's mighty revelation. God's grace appears to all men. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

### CHRISTMAS DAY – THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Christ is born! Isaiah looks ahead 600 years and tells of the joy of Christ's coming. In Hebrews, we see his unique glory. John tells us of the Word, begotten of his Father before all worlds, who came and lived among us.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 52:7-10** – God will bring good news to his people. The people rejoice when they see what their God has done. God will show his glory to all people by sending his Son to save the world.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 1:1-9** – Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." As impressive as the angels are, Jesus is even more impressive because he is God's one and only Son.

**GOSPEL: John 1:1-14** – Jesus is not just a little baby, born in Bethlehem. He is the true Son of God, who *was even before the beginning*. He created this world. Now he takes on human flesh to save us and to make known God's love and God's salvation for all.

### THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

A Christian's life is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God.

**FIRST LESSON: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26** – The boy Samuel serves the LORD joyfully and faithfully.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 2:10-18** – To win our redemption, a ransom had to be paid by Jesus who was "made like his brothers in every way." The Christ child came as our Brother!

**GOSPEL: Luke 2:41-52** – Jesus has always been our perfect Savior. Even as a child. He gladly heard God's Word and obeyed his parents to keep God's Law for us.

### THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

We see the joy of salvation in the incarnate Son of God in Isaiah's prophecy, in Paul's prayer and thanksgiving for the believers in Ephesus, and in the opening verses of John's Gospel.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 61:10, 62:3** – Out of love for his Old and New Testament Church, God will let the glory of his salvation spring up before all nations.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18** – Paul gives thanks that the Gentile Ephesians have seen and praised God's righteousness. Now he prays that they will also see the riches they have inherited as children of God.

**GOSPEL: John 1:14-18** – We see the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, coming into the world. The final paragraph of this selection magnificently states, "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

## The Christian Year - C

### THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

The word *epiphany* means "a showing" or "a revealing." Today we see Jesus revealed as Savior of the world.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 60:1-6** – The New Testament Church will be filled with the light of Christ. The Church will be very large, filled with people from all nations.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 3:2-12** – The mystery of Christ is revealed by the Holy Spirit. The Gentiles are a part of God's forgiven family because of Jesus' work. Now God wants this mystery of Christ proclaimed through us, his Church!

**GOSPEL: Matthew 2:1-12** – The wise men visit the young Jesus, fulfilling the prophecies that Gentiles would come to Jesus and proclaim him as Savior of the world.

### THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY – THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

God anointed Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit at his baptism. This anointing gave Jesus the title *Messiah* or *Christ*, which both mean "the Anointed one."

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 62:10-12** – Isaiah points to the beginning of Christ's work, "See, your Savior comes." He also points to our baptism, "They will be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD."

**SECOND LESSON: Titus 3:4-7** – Paul sums up the entire gospel. God saves us by the "washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." By faith we wear the perfect holiness that our Savior won us.

**GOSPEL: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22** – The Father installs Jesus into his office as our Prophet, High Priest and King. The Holy Spirit comes down on Jesus in the form of a dove. The Father bears witness to the Son, with whom he is well pleased.

### THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Christ reveals his glory and strengthens the faith of his disciples.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 62:1-5** – Isaiah prophesies about the glory of "Zion," the Church of God in the New Covenant. The glory of the Church will shine in its message of salvation to all. God will be with his Church as a bridegroom is with his bride.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11** – This lesson begins a series of readings from the latter part of 1 Corinthians. In this first reading, Paul speaks of the Spirit's gifts, including the gift of faith itself.

**GOSPEL: John 2:1-11** – By miracles Jesus strengthens the faith of his followers. The fact that Christ revealed his glory at a wedding shows Christ's approval of marriage, and his concern for our needs, no matter how trivial.



### THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Jesus is the Messiah. We see him in prophecy and in fulfillment. He is our great Deliverer.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 61:1-6** – Isaiah pictures the glory of the Church the Messiah will build.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 12:12-21, 26-27** – As the human body has many parts, each with its own special function, so the body of Christ has members with various gifts. All work together in love and concern for each other and for the good of the whole.

**GOSPEL: Luke 4:14-21** – Luke shows Jesus as the Messiah promised by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus reads the lesson from Isaiah and showed how it was a direct prophecy of him.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

God protects those who share his word and he gives them strength to do his work.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 1:4-10** – Jeremiah writes about his own commission from the LORD to be his messenger and to proclaim the LORD's Word to the nations. Jeremiah's preaching would bring harsh judgment on some and rich promise to others.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13** – Paul compares the Church to the body of Christ. Paul urges us to desire the gift of Christian love most of all.

**GOSPEL: Luke 4:20-32** – Jesus, like Jeremiah, brings a message from God that is true, whether people accept it or not.

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

As Jesus called his disciples to help in his ministry, he also calls us to service.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 6:1-8** – The LORD calls Isaiah to be his mouthpiece. Isaiah confesses his unworthiness before the LORD because he is a sinful human being.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 14:12b-20** – Paul talks about the gifts that strengthen the Christian Church. Speaking in the most beautiful language is meaningless without *agape*, that is, *special selfless love*.

**GOSPEL: Luke 5:1-11** – Jesus calls Peter, James and John into full-time service as his apostles. In word and deed Jesus shows himself as the divine Savior, full of grace and power.

## The Christian Year - C

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Our victorious Lord has power over sickness and death.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 17:5-8** – Jeremiah's message from the LORD is a judgment on unbelievers but a blessing to believers.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20** – Christ's victory over death means all believers have the power of the resurrection from the dead.

**GOSPEL: Luke 6:17-26** – Jesus is mighty in deed as he heals the sick, and mighty in word as he speaks with divine authority.

### THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Jesus shows us how we can reflect his light in this world.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 45:3-8a, 15** – God strengthens Jacob as he is about to move his entire family and household into Egypt to survive during the famine. God renews the promise he made to Abraham and Isaac with Jacob.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38a, 42-50** – This is Paul's *Resurrection Chapter*. The apostle teaches that we will rise from the dead. The bodies of believers will be glorified and will be imperishable.

**GOSPEL: Luke 6:27-38** – We are tempted to hate those who hate us. Jesus commands an altogether different kind of behavior, one totally unexpected in this world. He says to his hearers: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

### THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

What is the relationship between faith and love? A living faith produces fruits of love that fill the life of a Christian.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 7:1-7** – Although the people of Judah paid lip service to the temple of the LORD, they still mistreated the poor, stole, murdered, and committed adultery. Having the temple and performing the sacrifices alone were not true religion. The LORD wants the full devotion of our hearts and minds– not just the right words and actions at the right times.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 16:5-9, 13-14** – As Paul closes his letter, he makes travel plans and encourages the Corinthians, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love."

**GOSPEL: Luke 6:39-49** – Jesus tells his disciples about the fruits of faith that show themselves in works of Christian love. Jesus uses four illustrations to warn against acts of hypocrisy and to encourage good works toward others.

### **THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY – THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD**

God reveals his glory to Moses on Mt. Sinai and to the disciples at the transfiguration of Christ.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 34:29-35** – The reflection of the glory of the LORD on Moses' face was a sign of God's covenant with his people. Moses' face shone because he had spoken with the LORD.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6** – The light of the gospel reveals the glory of Jesus Christ. When we preach Jesus as Lord, his light shines into human hearts and shows God's glory.

**GOSPEL: Luke 9:28-36** – Jesus reveals his glory as the Son of God. The disciples see this glory only for a moment. Peter wants to stay on the mountain and enjoy the glory. We will share this glory when Jesus takes us into eternal glory.

### **ASH WEDNESDAY**

Ash Wednesday is a day of repentance. Outward observances and customs are fine, but they are all empty without a broken and truly repentant heart.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 59:12-20** – Isaiah confesses the sins of the nation. God is greatly displeased that there is no justice. So he works salvation for his people himself. "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins."

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2** – If we continue to live in sin, it will destroy the message of Christ's peace we bear and destroy our effectiveness as Christ's ambassadors. If we are truly Jesus' disciples, our lives will show our connection to him.

**GOSPEL: Luke 18:9-14** – Jesus tells what kind of person stands justified in the eyes of God. It is not a person like the Pharisee– who trusts in his own righteousness and good works. It is a person like the tax collector– who humbly trusts in God's mercy for sinners. He goes home justified before God.

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT**

Today we have a twofold theme: Christ's power over Satan in temptation and thanksgiving for God's deliverance.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 26:5-10** – Just as God led his ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land, he now guides the people of his Church through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 10:8b-13** – Paul emphasizes salvation through the power of Christ. That salvation is for everyone.

**GOSPEL: Luke 4:1-13** – Jesus begins his ministry by subjecting himself to Satan's assaults. He overpowers the Enemy with the Word of God.

## The Christian Year - C

### THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Not all people want to listen to what God has to say.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 26:8-15** – The people hated Jeremiah when he foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. He was one of many prophets who suffered at the hands of unbelieving Jews.

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 3:17-4:1** – Paul warns about the "enemies of the cross of Christ." He urges us to stand firm in the face of the world's hatred. We remember that our citizenship is in Christ's eternal kingdom of heaven.

**GOSPEL: Luke 13:31-35** – Christ's weeps for Jerusalem, a city that will be the scene of his death. Jesus also prophesies, "On the third day I will reach my goal." His battle will end in the victory of Easter.

### THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

God reminds us of his gracious promises. We dare never reject these promises.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 3:1-8b, 10-15** – God's assures Moses that he has seen the affliction of his people in Egypt. He has heard their cries for help. He promises to lead them to a better land. God also hears the cries of people in the slavery of sin. He has sent Jesus, who by his death offers an escape from this slavery. He promises to lead his people to an eternal inheritance with himself in heaven.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13** – While the children of Israel were on the way to the promised land of Canaan, they were still in danger. Many fell into sin, displeased God and perished on the way. There is a warning in this for us. Our salvation in Christ is certain, but by our own disobedience to God, we can fall and lose our eternal inheritance in Christ.

**GOSPEL: Luke 13:1-9** – God is gracious. He is long suffering. He grants time for repentance. But there is a day of judgement ahead when those who have despised God's call to repentance.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

The heart of the gospel is God's undeserved love for all.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 12:1-6** – Isaiah is happy because he can sing, "Surely it is God who saves me." He trusts in his saving God and is not afraid.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25** – Paul writes about the saving power in the message of Christ crucified. This gospel message may be a stumbling block to some and a foolishness to others. This message of the cross is his power of salvation for those God has called to faith.

**GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32** – Jesus tells the story of the son who left his father and wasted his life, but found true happiness when he returned to his father. Jesus explained his purpose for coming into the world: to heal the sick, to find the lost, to raise the dead.

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Because our sins are forgiven, we can forget the past and begin our new lives directed by God's Word and by the Holy Spirit.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 43:16-21** – Isaiah speaks to God's people and reminds them that God saved them from the Pharaoh's army. God would also rescue them and lead them home from their captivity in Babylon.

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 3:8-14** – Paul looks to our eternal home in heaven. We receive this inheritance of righteousness from God through faith. God assures us of this by Christ's resurrection from the dead.

**GOSPEL: Luke 20:9-19** – Jesus tells the parable of the tenants in the vineyard. He also comments on the psalmist's prophecy about himself as the stone. He is "the stone the builders rejected." He is also "the capstone" who will crush his enemies.

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT – PALM SUNDAY

We see Christ's humility and glory on Palm Sunday. Christ's entry into Jerusalem shows his humility and foreshadows his death. The praises the people sing are a foretaste of his victory. The cross leads to a crown.

**FIRST LESSON: Zechariah 9:9-10** – The people are discouraged after their return from captivity. Zechariah offers them new hope and encouragement. He reminds them of their coming Savior-King. In lowliness and humility he would set up his kingdom of peace to the "ends of the earth."

**SECOND LESSON: Philippians 2:5-11** – This section tells of the humiliation of Christ and his final glory. This lowliness of Christ is our example for dealing with one another.

**GOSPEL: Luke 19:28-40** – On the Sunday before his death his followers hail him as King and Lord.

### MAUNDY THURSDAY

The most common name for this day, Maundy Thursday, comes from its Latin name, *Dies Mandati*, the day of the Commandment, referring Christ's commands, "You also should wash one another's feet." "A new commandment I give you: Love one another." "Do this in remembrance of me."

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 12:1-14** – God gives his people instructions for the Old Covenant, the Passover, foreshadowing "the new Covenant in my [Christ's] blood."

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 10:15-25** – We read about the "new covenant" in the work of Jesus, our great High Priest. He shed his blood for us and gave us a direct approach to the throne of God's grace.

**GOSPEL: Luke 22:7-20** – Jesus and his disciples celebrate their last Passover together. Jesus then replaces the Passover with the Lord's Supper. By this Sacrament, we receive that which bought us– the body and blood of the Lord. Christ gives it to us as the seal of the New Covenant. This sacred meal is also a foretaste of the feast which the saints will enjoy with Jesus in heaven.

## The Christian Year - C

### GOOD FRIDAY

Jesus' humiliation was undeserved and voluntary. He endured it in our place. He completed the satisfaction for our sins.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12** – Isaiah describes God's exalted Servant, Jesus Christ. The LORD exalted his Servant because he humbled himself to inhuman shame to carry out God's purpose of saving sinners.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9** – The writer of Hebrews applies Isaiah's theme to the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' service as high priest is loving, sympathetic, effective and eternal.

**GOSPEL: John 19:17-30** – John records as a historical fact what Isaiah foresaw, and what the writer to the Hebrews ponders. The Servant of the LORD acts as our great High Priest by sacrificing himself once for all on Calvary's cross.

### THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD – EASTER DAWN

The stone rolled away from the empty tomb proclaim our Redeemer's victory over death.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 12:1-6** – Isaiah is happy because he can sing, "Surely it is God who saves me." He trusts in his saving God and is not afraid.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:51-57** – Paul ends his *Resurrection Chapter* with a mighty song of victory over sin and death. Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection.

**GOSPEL: John 20:1-18** – When Mary Magdalene sees the tomb empty, she gets Peter and John. They see and believe that Jesus is risen from the dead. Still startled, Mary weeps by the tomb until the Lord calls her by name, "Mary."

### THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD – EASTER DAY

For us the empty tomb shows our Redeemer's victory over death.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 15:1-11** – Moses saw a glorious miracle: God delivered his people and destroyed his enemies at the Red Sea. The miracle of Jesus' resurrection is also a deliverance of God's people and the destruction of the enemy, Death. What could have been more fitting than that Moses should write this song and lead his people in their praise to the LORD!

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11** – In the resurrection chapter, Paul lists the many appearances of the risen Lord.

**GOSPEL: Luke 24:1-12** – The women visit the tomb "on the first day of the week, very early in the morning." After hearing the women's report of the empty tomb, the disciples refuse to believe it.

### **THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER**

The risen Lord gave his Church his work of spreading the kingdom of God.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 5:12, 17-32** – The Lord works through his disciples to heal and proclaim the good news. Like their Master, the disciples face opposition from the leaders of the Jews. They continue to witness for the Lord, obeying God rather than men.

**SECOND LESSON: Revelation 1:4-18** – Jesus commissions John to write to the seven churches. In a vision John sees the Lord of the Church, who died and rose and lives and rules forever. He holds the keys of death and hell.

**GOSPEL: John 20:19-31** – On Easter evening, Jesus gave his disciples the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

### **THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**

The risen Christ is the center of our preaching and the object of our praise.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 9:1-20** – Jesus appears to Saul on the road to Damascus. Jesus changes Saul, a persecutor of the Church, into Paul, the apostle, writer and missionary.

**SECOND LESSON: Revelation 5:11-14** – John sees the heavenly chorus singing praises to the Lamb who was slain, who is worthy to receive praise and honor and glory and power forever.

**GOSPEL: John 21:1-14** – Jesus appears to his disciples a third time after the resurrection in Galilee, where he performed the miracle of the catch of many fish.

### **THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Our risen Lord is our Good Shepherd. He brings us to the living waters of eternal life.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 13:15-16a, 26-33** – Paul testifies to the power of Christ's death and resurrection before both Jews and Gentiles. These words are from his sermon in Antioch of Pisidia on his first missionary journey.

**SECOND LESSON: Revelation 7:9-17** – John sees Jesus Christ as the Lamb at the throne of God. One of the elders declares this Lamb to be the Shepherd who leads his people to living waters.

**GOSPEL: John 10:22-30** – Jesus answers the Jews who demand that he tell them plainly if he is the Christ. He tells them that they do not listen to him because they do not belong to his flock. His sheep hear his voice and obey it, for he is their Good Shepherd.

## The Christian Year - C

### THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Christ is victorious over the enemies of the Christian Church.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 13:44-52** – The Word of the Lord grows. The Jews rejected the gospel, so Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles.

**SECOND LESSON: Revelation 21:1-6** – In the "New Jerusalem" (heaven), evil has been destroyed. Christ has won the victory, ushering in the "New Creation."

**GOSPEL: John 13:31-35** – Jesus speaks to his disciples about his death, resurrection, ascension and reign in heaven. He speaks of the new commandment of love, by which his disciples will show that they are truly his followers.

### THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

We look forward to Pentecost as the Lord promises the Holy Spirit.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 14:8-18** – By the power of the Spirit, Paul and Barnabas heal a crippled man. When the people of Lystra see this miracle, they think Paul and Barnabas are the gods Zeus (Jupiter) and Hermes (Mercury). Paul and Barnabas tell the people to turn from worthless false gods to the living God.

**SECOND LESSON: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23** – John sees the glory of heaven as the New Jerusalem. The glory of the victorious Lamb of God gives light to all.

**GOSPEL: John 14:23-29** – Jesus promises the Holy Spirit and peace, a peace "not as the world gives." This is a peace of heart and mind that comes from the forgiveness of sins. It is a peace which passes all understanding, a peace only God can give.

### THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

The Ascension Festival was celebrated in the early centuries of the Christian Church. With Christmas and Easter it was considered one of the three "Festivals of our Lord's Godhead."

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 1:1-11** – Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to the apostles and commissions them as his messengers. We see Jesus go to heaven visibly, and hear the comforting message of the angels that Jesus will come again in the same way.

**SECOND LESSON: Ephesians 1:16-23** – Paul tells us the importance of Christ's ascension. It shows God's power and the kingship of Christ over all things, especially the Church.

**GOSPEL: Luke 24:44-53** – Luke summarizes Christ's work during the forty days from Easter until the day "he was taken up to heaven."



### **THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER**

The results of Christ's resurrection are eternal.

**FIRST LESSON: Acts 16:6-10** – Paul and his fellow missionaries travel through Asia Minor (Turkey). One night, Paul has a vision of a man begging that Paul preach the gospel in Macedonia (Greece).

**SECOND LESSON: Revelation 22:12-17, 20** – John has a vision of heaven and its blessedness. The Lord himself promises to come soon, so his faithful witness may share in life everlasting. John closes his vision and his book of Revelation with the prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus."

**GOSPEL: John 17:20-26** – Jesus prays for his disciples. We know that even now Jesus is pleading for us at the right hand of the Father. He wants us to be with him forever in glory.

### **THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

Pentecost was originally a festival of firstfruits, like our Thanksgiving. We celebrate it as the birthday of the Christian Church. It still is a festival of thanksgiving for the firstfruits—of a harvest of souls. On the first Pentecost, 3,000 people were baptized and added to the Church.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 11:1-9** – At the tower of Babel, God did not want the people to stay at one place and make a name for themselves. God confused their language and scattered them. This confusion was reversed at the miracle of Pentecost.

**SECOND LESSON: Acts 2:1-21** – The Holy Spirit gave the disciples the ability to speak in other languages, so people from all nations could hear about the wonders of God. Peter explained that this outpouring of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-32), and that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

**GOSPEL: John 15:26-27** – Jesus promises to send the "Counselor," the Holy Spirit. Jesus also explains that the Holy Spirit would bring convincing testimony before the people of this world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – THE HOLY TRINITY**

On Trinity Sunday we look at the work of the triune God.

**FIRST LESSON: Proverbs 8:22-31** – Jesus speaks as Wisdom personified. He was with the Father from eternity and at creation.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 5:1-5** – We have peace with God the Father through the saving work of Jesus Christ. God has sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts. We accept this message of justification by faith.

**GOSPEL: John 16:12-15** – Jesus speaks about the coming of the Spirit of truth. When the Spirit came, he reveals everything about the Father and the Son.

## The Christian Year - C

### THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Like Jesus, we share God's love and the message of forgiveness with those who don't know God.

**FIRST LESSON: 1 Kings 8:22-23, 41-43** – At the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, Solomon prays that even foreigners may find an answer to prayer when calling on God for help in his house.

**SECOND LESSON: Galatians 1:1-10** – This Epistle lesson is the first in a six week series of readings from Galatians.

**GOSPEL: Luke 7:1-10** – A Roman centurion asks Jesus to help his sick servant. Jesus commends the centurion's faith as greater than any he has found in Israel.

### THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

God helps people in times of need and sorrow.

**FIRST LESSON: 1 Kings 17:17-24** – God uses Elijah to restore a child to life.

**SECOND LESSON: Galatians 1:11-24** – Paul testifies to the power of the gospel- it is not something man made up. It is the Word of God!

**GOSPEL: Luke 7:11-17** – Jesus' miracles prove that he is true God. When the widow of Nain grieves the loss of her son, the Savior comes with his Word of life and hope. He proves his power over death and raises her son. He has conquered death for us, too. In faith we turn to him for help. In his Word, we find the sure hope of eternal life.

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

God declares forgiveness to penitent sinners.

**FIRST LESSON: 2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15** – God sent Nathan to show David his sin. David repented of his sin and received the prophet's assurance of the LORD's forgiveness.

**SECOND LESSON: Galatians 2:11-21** – Paul tells how he opposed Peter when he made Gentiles follow Jewish customs. Peter was guilty of setting aside God's grace and taught that righteousness could be gained by the law. If that were true, then Christ died for nothing.

**GOSPEL: Luke 7:36-50** – A sinful woman anoints Jesus at the house of Simon the Pharisee. Jesus contrasts woman's act of love and Simon's lack of hospitality. The woman loved much, because she knew Jesus had forgiven her sins. Jesus praised her faith which was active in deeds of love.

### **THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

Jesus is the suffering servant of God, who fought sin and death that we might have life.

**FIRST LESSON: Zechariah 12:7-10** – Zechariah foretells the Messiah's suffering and death in Jerusalem.

**SECOND LESSON: Galatians 3:23-29** – Being a disciple of Christ by baptism and faith means that we are clothed with Christ. He lives in us, and we live for him. We belong to him now and forever.

**GOSPEL: Luke 9:18-24** – For the first time Jesus tells his disciples clearly that he must suffer, be killed and rise again on the third day to fulfill his mission. He tells his followers that their entire lives will be changed. They also will have to bear a cross after him.

### **THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

Our service to the Lord comes first in our lives. We set aside whatever stands in the way of service to God.

**FIRST LESSON: 1 Kings 19:14-21** – God calls Elisha to follow Elijah as a prophet. When Elijah puts his outer garment on Elisha, Elisha leaves his oxen and his work behind and follows Elijah.

**SECOND LESSON: Galatians 5:1, 13-25** – Living by the Spirit of God means that we are no longer ruled by the desires of our sinful nature. We show the fruits of God's Spirit in a life of good works.

**GOSPEL: Luke 9:51-62** – Jesus shows several people who want to follow him the sacrifices necessary to serve him.

### **THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

We focus on the glory of the New Testament Church of Jesus Christ

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 66:10-14** – Isaiah prophesies that God will richly bless the "New Jerusalem," the Church of all believers. The Church will see new growth when Gentiles come.

**SECOND LESSON: Galatians 6:1-10, 14-16** – Share the peace you have with God through Christ. God saves believers from all nations so they can share his peace.

**GOSPEL: Luke 10:1-12, 16-20** – Jesus sends out seventy-two workers and instructs them how to help gather in his harvest.

## The Christian Year - C

### THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Love is the fulfillment of the law.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 30:9-14** – God tells Moses to read the entire law to the people at least once every seven years.

**SECOND LESSON: Colossians 1:1-14** – Paul commends his fellow believers for showing fruits of faith in their deeds of love. He constantly prays for them, that they may share the eternal inheritance in heaven which Christ won for them by the shedding of his blood.

**GOSPEL: Luke 10:25-37** – An expert in the law asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. "Love the Lord your God... ..love your neighbor as yourself." When the expert admits that he doesn't know who his neighbor is, Jesus tells him the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan. Our neighbor is any person who needs our help.

### THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Just as God was a guest in Abraham's tents, and as Jesus was a guest at the home of Mary and Martha, he also visits us and speaks with us in his Word, the Bible.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 18:1-14** – The LORD visits Abraham and shares his company as a friend. We want down-to-earth fellowship with our God like Abraham had. God promises that we can look forward to being with him when we eat and drink at the feast of the Lamb.

**SECOND LESSON: Colossians 1:21-29** – Paul glorifies Christ, the Head of the Church. Paul labors for Christ according to the power which God gives him.

**GOSPEL: Luke 10:38-42** – Jesus is a guest in the house of Mary and Martha. Jesus says that Mary, who listened to his teaching, has "chosen what is better" in her service to the Lord.

### THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The life of a Christian includes prayer.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 18:20-32** – Abraham pleads for the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

**SECOND LESSON: Colossians 2:6-15** – Paul proclaims Christ as true God, who will win complete victory over all our enemies.

**GOSPEL: Luke 11:1-13** – Jesus teaches his disciples to pray. First, he gives them a model prayer, *the Lord's Prayer*. Then, he teaches in parables about persistence in prayer.

### **THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

Set your hope on God and his blessings rather than on earthly things.

**FIRST LESSON: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:18-26** – Those who seek lasting peace and happiness in earthly possessions will be disappointed. All earthly things pass away. We find what is good and lasting in God and his blessings.

**SECOND LESSON: Colossians 3:1-11** – Paul shows how important heavenly blessings are. We set our minds on things above where Christ is at the right hand of God.

**GOSPEL: Luke 12:13-21** – Christ warns against greed. He tells the parable of a Rich Fool, who stores up earthly treasures so he can "eat, drink and be merry." God takes away this man's life. He never gets what he worked for.

### **THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

God's children live by faith, clinging to God's promises of better things to come.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 15:1-6** – Abraham trusted in God's promise that his descendants would be as many as the stars in the sky. Abraham believed, even though he and his wife Sarah were very old and still without children. Abraham believed that through his descendants all the families of the earth would be blessed.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16** – Abraham is included among the Old Testament examples of faith. They were people who "were longing for a better country– a heavenly one."

**GOSPEL: Luke 12:32-40** – Jesus points to the kingdom the Father promises to his "little flock," and urges us to be ready for his coming.

### **THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

God calls on us to proclaim his law and gospel, and to stand firm in our faith even when people give us trouble because of that faith.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 23:23-29** – God's strongly warns all who prophesy lies. God will destroy them with the true Word which is "like fire and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces."

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 12:1-13** – The examples of the Old Testament fathers encourage us to stand firm in our faith. We also keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who suffered shame and death for us. He strengthens us in whatever trials God may use to discipline and train us.

**GOSPEL: Luke 12:49-53** – Jesus warns believers that they will have serious problems. Their faith will be tested, even to the point where they will have to choose between the false beliefs of members of their own family or choose to follow the true way as taught by Christ.

## The Christian Year - C

### THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Today's lessons foretell things to come.

**FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 66:18-23** – In his closing chapter, Isaiah points to the glory of the coming New Testament Church, a Church gathered from all nations, in which all believers are priests before the God.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 12:18-24** – The inspired writer compares Mt. Sinai, where Moses received the law, with Mt. Zion, the New Testament Church, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.

**GOSPEL: Luke 13:22-30** – Jesus warns about the final judgment, when many "will try to enter [heaven] and will not be able to." God will admit only those who enter through "the narrow door."

### THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Our spirit of humility shows itself in helpfulness and selfless concern for others.

**FIRST LESSON: Proverbs 25:6-7** – This lesson contains brief sayings to illustrate how we show wisdom and humility toward others in words and actions.

**SECOND LESSON: Hebrews 13:1-8** – In this closing section, the writer gives practical applications of faith in action and love at work.

**GOSPEL: Luke 14:1, 7-14** – A Christian is not concerned about human approval and repayment in what he does. He is concerned about the approval of the heavenly Father, who sees all.

### THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Be wise! Evaluate your life carefully. Know your strengths so you can fight your weaknesses.

**FIRST LESSON: Proverbs 9:8-12** – All true wisdom begins with "the fear of the LORD." When we give God glory for his power and goodness, we are headed in the right direction.

**SECOND LESSON: Philemon 1:10-21** – Paul asks Philemon, a master, to welcome back into service Onesimus, his runaway slave. Paul expects a favorable answer because he makes the request in Christian love.

**GOSPEL: Luke 14:25-33** – Jesus encourages us to look to him to find strength to stand firm to the end. We know that we cannot rely on ourselves. Only on Christ.

### THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The LORD is concerned about lost sinners. We are too!

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 32:7-14** – Moses prays for his fellow Israelites when they fall into idolatry. He appeals to the LORD's covenant promise.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Timothy 1:12-17** – Paul knows that he is the "worst of sinners." He wants to share the Savior's love with other sinners.

**GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-10** – Jesus' enemies criticize him: "This man welcomes sinners." What a summary of the gospel! The parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin picture Jesus' concern for the lost.

### THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Being a slave to money is a horrible life.

**FIRST LESSON: Amos 8:4-7** – Amos cries out against those who gain money in dishonest ways, robbing the poor and needy of food. God will call such people to account and punish them.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Timothy 2:1-8** – Paul urges us to pray for all people, including those in authority. Good government is a gift of God. He uses government to preserve peace in this world so the gospel might be brought to all. All earthly gifts, even earthly governments, serve God's saving purpose for the world.

**GOSPEL: Luke 16:1-13** – Christ teaches about the proper use of money and possessions. We are to be wise and faithful in our use of money. Money is not an *end* in itself, but a *means* to build God's kingdom.

### THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

We cannot ask the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" With our riches comes responsibility to share with others out of Christian love.

**FIRST LESSON: Amos 6:1-7** – Amos warns against those who are at ease among God's people, who spend their time feasting, but who don't care about "the ruin of Joseph." God threatened to divide the kingdom of Israel if his people would not turn back to him.

**SECOND LESSON: 1 Timothy 6:6-16** – Paul advises us to avoid desires for earthly riches, because "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." Rather, we "fight the good fight of faith" and "take hold of the eternal life" to which God calls us.

**GOSPEL: Luke 16:19-31** – Jesus tells the well-known story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. One was poor in eternity because he trusted in the riches of this world. The other was poor on earth and forever blessed at Abraham's side in heaven because he trusted in God.

### THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

We always work to build up our faith.

**FIRST LESSON: Habakkuk 1:1-3; 2:1-4** – In Habakkuk, we read the well-known passage that Paul quotes: "The righteous will live by faith." This is the passage Martin Luther used to summarize God's grace.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Timothy 1:3-14** – Paul points to the Holy Scriptures as the foundation of a faith. A faith built on God's Word will stand firm despite the many evils which will arise in the last days.

**GOSPEL: Luke 17:1-10** – Jesus lists the qualities a Christian shows in his life of faith. The disciples ask Jesus to increase their faith. He tells them to depend on God's grace alone for growth.

The Christian Year - C

**THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

Faith in the Savior changes lives.

**FIRST LESSON: Ruth 1:1-19a** – Ruth is faithful to her mother-in-law. They return to Bethlehem, where Ruth, a Moabite, becomes one of Christ's ancestors.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Timothy 1:8-13** – Paul doesn't despair, even though he is suffering in prison. His captivity strengthens his hope of the eternal inheritance Jesus promised him. Paul encourages us to remain faithful to Christ, just as he has.

**GOSPEL: Luke 17:11-19** – Jesus heals ten lepers. Only one man returned to give thanks. Jesus told him, "Your faith has made you well."

**THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

Persistent prayer is important.

**FIRST LESSON: Genesis 32:22-30** – Jacob probably didn't realize at first that he had been wrestling with the LORD. Because of Jacob's persistence, God changed his name from Jacob (which means "heel grabber") to Israel (which means "he struggles with God").

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5** – Paul comments on the use of the Holy Scriptures. He warns about those who want to hear what pleases them and not what the Lord has revealed in his Word.

**GOSPEL: Luke 18:1-8a** – Jesus tells a parable about prayer. An unjust judge grants the request of a widow simply because she keeps bothering him. God, who is good, will certainly hear the prayers of his people who cry out to him day and night.

**THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

We can stand before a just and holy God because of what Christ did for us.

**FIRST LESSON: Deuteronomy 10:12-22** – God demands perfect righteousness. Luther's explanation of the First Commandment speaks the thoughts and even the words of Moses: "We should fear, love and trust in God above all things."

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18** – We rest on God's mercy and grace alone for our hopes of heaven. Paul had this trust. With confidence he could face death. He believed in his Savior Jesus Christ. He was sure that the Lord would bring him safely to heaven.

**GOSPEL: Luke 18:18-27** – A rich ruler loved his possessions more than Jesus. No one can be saved by his own efforts. But thanks be to God, what is impossible for us is possible for God! Forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are gifts of his grace.



### **THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

God forgives all who repent.

**FIRST LESSON: Exodus 34:5-9** – Moses pleads with the LORD to pardon the sins of the people of Israel. They had worshiped a golden calf. God renews his covenant of grace with them. He forgives the sins of his people.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 11-12** – Paul thanks God for the grace he revealed in the gift of his Son Jesus Christ.

**GOSPEL: Luke 19:1-10** – Zacchaeus, a tax collector repents of his sin. Jesus assured him that as a true son of believing Abraham, he could be sure of his salvation.

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY OF END TIME – REFORMATION SUNDAY**

The two main doctrines in Scripture are the law and gospel. Our lessons speak about the freedom from the law through the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 31:31-34** – Jeremiah teaches us about the "priesthood of all believers." Every Christian has a special relationship with the LORD. We can approach our heavenly Father boldly and confidently with no mediator but Christ himself.

**SECOND LESSON: Romans 3:19-28** – Paul contrasts law and gospel. He tells us that the law serves only to convince the sinner of his lost and condemned condition. We cannot win God's favor by keeping the law. But there is righteousness and salvation apart from the law. Paul declares that a man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ, not by the deeds of the law.

**GOSPEL: John 8:31-36** – Jesus tells the Jews that if they believe in him as the Son of God and continue in his Word, they will be free. By his suffering and death, and by his perfect obedience to the law, Jesus frees them from the demands as well as the curse of the law.

### **THE SECOND SUNDAY OF END TIME – THE LAST JUDGMENT**

God will come to "judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity." He will condemn those who rejected his Word and lived contrary to his will. He will bring home those who are covered with the merits of Christ and who lived to his glory.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 26:1-6** – Jeremiah preaches judgment. "If you do not listen to what the LORD says, he will level Jerusalem and make it an object of cursing."

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10** – Paul tells us that "God's judgment is right." He will deliver his children from suffering and bring them to his kingdom. He will also pay back trouble on those who troubled his children.

**GOSPEL: Luke 19:11-27** – Jesus tells the parable of the Ten Minas. A nobleman tells his servants to "put his money to work" until he returns. Even so Christ tells us to make full use of the gospel in Word and Sacrament until he returns.

The Christian Year - C

**THE THIRD SUNDAY OF END TIME –  
THE SAINTS TRIUMPHANT**

Our hope of eternal life helps us to face up to the problems of life with confidence and hope.

**FIRST LESSON: 1 Chronicles 29:10-13** – King David brings his reign over God's people to a close and reminds them of God's blessings and urges them to praise God's name.

**SECOND LESSON: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5** – Paul asks God for strength to spread the message of salvation. Paul asks God to preserve his people from all evil.

**GOSPEL: Luke 20:27-38** – Christ answers the unbelieving Sadducees concerning matters of life and the resurrection.

**THE LAST SUNDAY OF END TIME –  
CHRIST THE KING**

We end the Church Year with the festival of Christ the King. Our lessons remind us that Christ lives and reigns with his Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. But his rule is a different kind of kingship that many people can't understand.

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 23:2-6** – Jeremiah writes about a dark time in Israel's history, when the priests and leaders of the people were scattering God's flock. But God gives his people hope by pointing them to a King who will come. He will come to execute judgment and justice on the earth. Judah and Israel will be safe from God's wrath because this King is the LORD their Righteousness.

**SECOND LESSON: Colossians 1:13-20** – Christ our King delivers us from the kingdom of darkness and Satan. He brings us into a new kingdom. This new kingdom is a kingdom of peace Jesus won for us with his own blood. The King now rules "over all creation." He rules over everything as "the head of the body, the Church."

**GOSPEL: Luke 23:35-43** – Christ the King sheds his blood on the cross. He assures a dying criminal of a place in his everlasting kingdom.

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