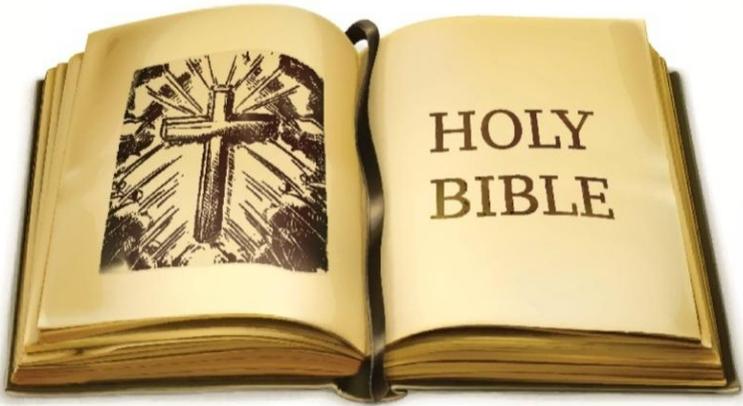


Each Day in the Word



November 2-29, 2025

FOREWORD

This booklet is compiled by the pastors of the Confessional Lutheran Ministerium for congregations and individuals not necessarily affiliated with any Lutheran denomination. Indeed, it is for anyone who finds it in their hands whether they are Lutheran or not. It is our prayer that God's people will be edified by this humble offering.

While it is tempting for everyone when reading daily devotional booklets to skip the Scripture lesson and read only the devotional material, it is highly recommended that the reader set their attention on the Scripture lesson before reading the devotion itself. The Holy Spirit tells us in Hebrews 4:12 that "the word of God is living and powerful." As the Scripture is the very Word of God, we ought to devote time and attention to it each day so that through it, God the Holy Spirit may strengthen our trust in His promises and kindle in our hearts love for God and our neighbor.

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Quotations from Martin Luther works are taken from Luther's Works, American Edition, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86), hereafter AE.

“For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.” (v. 30-32)

Today’s text destroys the false understanding which professes that God cannot put the Jews in hell because they were His chosen people and they had to disbelieve in order for the rest of the world to be redeemed. God’s Word (through Paul) makes clear that the same mercy that was poured out upon the Christians in Rome is the same mercy that was always there for the Jews—beginning with the promise (Genesis 3:15) and going still to this day! The descendants of Israel were meant to be the firstfruits of God’s gracious promise of life and salvation. The promise was given in the beginning; prophecy after prophecy took place pointing forward. And then the promise and the prophecies were fulfilled as Jesus Christ was sent to them to bring them holy glory, but they fell to pride and unbelief. All the saints of the Church are to carefully consider the warning that is in those who fell. God’s glory and salvation do not come from who we are or what we do. They come from our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom the Father is well-pleased in all things and who gave Himself as the great sacrifice for our redemption.

Rejoice that God’s Word of truth was brought to your ears to bring about repentance and belief within you. You now have the mercy seat of Christ Jesus to bless too—just as it was promised from the beginning!

Let us pray: Lord, grant to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

It's safe to say that if God Almighty were to resound His voice from heaven and proclaim, "Take heed!" that most (yet, shockingly, not everyone) would truly stop and listen carefully. God's Word through His Holy Scriptures holds the same weight. Jesus' teaching must be received in a profitable way. Otherwise, what's the use? It isn't meant to be just 'general information.' It's meant to kill and make alive. How it is received matters.

The Sowing Parable tells us about four different kinds of people. Although all of them hear the Word, only those in the last group "hear the Word, receive it, and bring forth fruit" (v. 20). The first group listens superficially. In the second group, the Word is used to create mere emotional gladness; thus, suffering and persecution take away whatever good the Word had created. The third group hears the Word but does not use that Word to put to death their sinful lusts and trust in Christ alone. Unable to serve two masters, the fruitfulness of the Word is choked by allowing sin to continue to rule in them.

God rightly uses the Law (through His Word) to expose man's sin and lost condition. God uses the Gospel (through His Word) to create saving faith in Jesus Christ. Only true faith which stems from the Gospel is able to love the neighbor. God gets the glory for both: faith and love toward neighbor. He may speak in parables, and His words may be lost on some, but it's only because He is the One who reveals understanding in His good time. He did this with His disciples so that they would eventually be inspired to pen the New Testament. We are thankful for this and we should continue to take heed to it.

Let us pray: Lord, grant to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Many people mistakenly believe that whenever Jesus says, “The kingdom of God,” that He is speaking about heaven. He is not. Rather, He is speaking about the workings of His holy (catholic, or universal) Church on earth.

As it is sung, and thus confessed in the hymn “The Church’s One Foundation,” the Church is built on the work of Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ places one into Christ’s Church. The early Church Fathers called this being brought into the Ark of the Church—saved from the flood of the world’s demise. When you look for the certainty of salvation in places other than in the work of Christ’s salvation (such as, in yourself and your works, or even in the triumphalism of a denomination), you are building another kingdom, which will be “left to you desolate” as Jesus proclaims (v. 35). Even statistical analysis of the probability of salvation based on the number saved will not give certainty. There is only one comforting answer, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate...” (v.24). In the book of Acts, chapter 10, (and in many other areas) Scripture also proclaims: “All the prophets testify about Him...” (v.43). Christ is the comforting answer. Christ is the narrow gate.

The Pharisees, however, rejected Jesus, and, thus, they also rejected the kingdom of God. So it is with all who reject Him. God’s inspired Word makes it clear: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” When your faith is being shaken, come to God holding on to Jesus Christ, because “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Let us pray: Lord, grant to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

More parables; and, in this section of Holy Scripture, the “kingdom of heaven” is spoken of by Jesus. The individual believer, who has faith in Christ, is not to be visibly pointed out because faith can’t be seen inside of an individual. What can be seen and pointed out is a person’s confession of the faith. Where one goes to church is where one goes to confess back to God what He has said in His Word. The Church catholic, however, is made up of believers in Jesus Christ whom only God can see, because He sees into the heart. Jesus speaks in parables in order to make clear the distinctions between those who falsely claim to be believers, and those who truly have faith in Christ.

The Book of Concord states clearly how God works to bring people to have a right (orthodox) confession: “To obtain such faith, God instituted the office of the [Pastoral] ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel” (Augsburg Confession, Article V). Lutherans also confess: “The church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly” (AC VI). The kingdom is like a mustard seed, three measures of meal, a Sower sowing seed, a treasure, a merchant, and a net. You can’t see faith, but you can judge the things that create faith.

As Jesus so comfortingly proclaimed to make it unmistakable: “These are they [the Scriptures] that testify about Me.” Rejoice that He has made Himself known to you through His means!

Let us pray: Lord, grant to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Kingdom of God, as mentioned earlier this week, is called Christ's Church, and it is built upon Christ. The appointed pastoral Ministry of the apostles and prophets bring about the teaching of Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone and the confession of His name. God promises to be present in this appointed Ministry that brings about the confession of Christ, for that is the only way that the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

When it comes to man, the Lutheran Confessions correctly profess this: "However, as to the declaration: Upon this rock I will build My Church, certainly the Church has not been built upon the authority of man, but upon the ministry of the confession which Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He accordingly addresses him as a minister: Upon this rock, that is, upon this ministry. Therefore he addresses him as a minister of this office in which this confession and doctrine is to be in operation and says: Upon this rock, that is, this preaching and ministry. Furthermore, the ministry of the New Testament is not bound to places and persons as was the Levitical ministry, but it is dispersed throughout the whole world, and is there where God gives His gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers; neither does this ministry avail on account of the authority of any person, but on account of the Word given by Christ. Nor does the person of a teacher add anything to this word and office; it matters not who is preaching and teaching it; if there are hearts who receive and cling to it, to them it is done as they hear and believe." (Treatise of the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 25-27).

Let us pray: Lord, grant to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

“Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away” (2 Corinthians 3:12-13).

A faithful pastor’s preaching and teaching is unlike Moses. A faithful pastor does not water down the Law or cut its brightness by means of a veil. There are times in which the pastor will use the full glory of the Law to convict you, so that you may learn to know your sins correctly. When the Law has shown you your sins and revealed God’s wrath and condemnation, however, then it is time for faithful pastors to cast the Law aside. At that point he will direct your attention solely to the Gospel message of forgiveness through faith in God’s Son. Through Jesus Christ, “we do not lose heart” (4:1).

There was certainly a glory in the holy Law of God, but the glory that came with the Gospel of forgiveness purchased by the holy Son of God far surpassed the Law’s glory.

As it is rightly confessed in the Book of Concord, and, as confessing Lutherans, you believe, teach, and confess: “Therefore the Spirit of Christ must not only comfort, but also through the office of the Law reprove the world of sin, (John 16:8), and thus must do in the New Testament, as the prophet says, (Isaiah 28:21), that is, He must do the work of another—reprove—in order that He may afterwards do His own work, which is to comfort and preach of grace” (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, V.10-11).

Let us pray: Lord, grant to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Adam and Eve, created completely “good” by God, walked with God in perfect communion. After the fall into sin, they were ashamed to be found naked in creation and hid from Him. Their own works-righteous clothing of fig leaves could not conceal their guilt. Thankfully, God gave His promise that His Son would crush the Serpent’s head. With that, guaranteeing what was to come, He clothed them by the sacrificed blood-shed skins of an animal (Gen. 3:21), foretelling the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

As long as we live in this sin-stained human nature, we groan and are burdened. Though we have been brought to believe in Jesus Christ and live by faith in God’s Son, we are not free from this body of sin. “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature” (Rom. 7:18). By God’s grace, we Christians are constantly fighting against the desires of our sinful nature. We live by faith, not by sight. We die to sin and rise again to new life through faith in Christ. We receive the (Pastoral) Ministry of reconciliation and the minister (pastor), as Christ’s ambassador, sent to reconcile us to God through the message of Jesus Christ.

Through the resurrection of the dead, we will be freed from the battles of this world. We will be “clothed with our heavenly dwelling” (2 Cor. 5:4). God’s deposit will reach fulfillment when we appear before Christ’s judgment seat, dressed in Christ’s white robes of forgiveness. The old has gone, the new has come. And the alleluias ring forth for eternity!

Let us pray: Lord, grant to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

“After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!’” (v1). The great multitude of the saints of God have been praying, “Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory”; and once they are in glory, as the Church triumphant, they joyfully proclaim the salvation that is now theirs, which is secured by Christ and received through faith in Him. That proclamation will be ours as well when we are transferred from the Church militant to the Church triumphant.

That proclamation also refers to the “true and righteous” judgments of God, who at the end of time, will judge the impenitent for their sins and avenge His servants. The good news of the book of Revelation is that no matter how dark our times may appear on this earth, God does in fact rule all things behind the scenes, and He will ultimately bring all things under His direct control.

Smoke from the incense of the prayers of the saints previously ascended to God pleading for our salvation from the oppression of those who oppose God, and now we see that in the end this smoke will be replaced by the smoke from their destruction which “rises up forever and ever!” (v3).

Thus, we may look forward to our joining the heavenly choir, singing the praise of God for saving us and completing justice on the impenitent who had oppressed us in this life. Christ ultimately shares His victory in heaven with those of us who have shared His suffering here on earth. For this reason, we can praise Him even now as we look forward to praising Him forever!

Let us pray: Almighty and eternal God, show Your mercy to Your humble servants. We put no trust in our own merits. Do not deal with us with Your judgment, but with Your forgiveness; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (vv29-30). Jesus gives us a general description of His second coming but does not give us the exact timeline for it. In fact, He tells us repeatedly to stay ready for His return for the precise reason that we do not know when that will be, and that He will come at a time that we “do not expect” (v44).

When He does finally return, we can rejoice, as He sends His angels to gather us from all points on the globe. He promised to rise from the dead, and He vindicated His word when He rose from the dead; and He promised to return, and He will vindicate His word when He returns, because His “words will by no means pass away” (v35).

For those of us who have received His salvation in faith, Jesus’ return is accomplishing our full salvation, but for the impenitent, His return is a fearsome prospect of judgment. The signs of His return will be unmistakable. Thus, the need is not to predict the time of His return, but always to stay ready for it by living in faith in Him.

Christ tells us that His return will be sudden; and since we cannot calculate when that return might be, the only option we have and His instruction to us is watch eagerly at all times for His imminent return. This means we are constantly to live in our baptism daily, repenting of sin daily, and receiving His forgiveness daily. As with His supper, so with His return; only by living in faith are we “truly well prepared” to receive Him.

Let us pray: Almighty and eternal God, show Your mercy to Your humble servants. We put no trust in our own merits. Do not deal with us with Your judgment, but with Your forgiveness; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Religious hypocrisy abounded in Jesus' day; it abounds in our day as well. In Jesus' day, the Sadducees were the hyper-liberal religious leaders who controlled the temple and the Jewish council. Being materialists, they did not believe in the supernatural but saw Jesus as a threat to their cash-flow and power, especially after He turned over the moneychangers' tables in the temple court. So, they come to Him and pose a question about resurrection because they do not believe in resurrection. They are trying to make Him look foolish, but Jesus turns that table on them as He tells them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (v29). Then Jesus explains both Scripture and the power of God to them as though they were foolish little school children. They claim to believe in the first five books of Moses, but they demonstrate that they do not believe what these books actually say about God and His power. In this way Jesus exposes their hypocrisy and vindicates the hope God's people have in the resurrection.

Likewise in our day, many claim to be Christian and even want to be leaders in Christian churches, but they fail to believe in basic biblical truths like the resurrection of the dead. Jesus exposes their hypocrisy as well when He says, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (v29). We, however, who have faith in Him and His word, know both Scripture and the power of God to raise the dead. He raised Christ from the dead, and we too will be raised from the dead, even as Christ promised us, "Because I live you also will live" (Jn 14:19).

Let us pray: Almighty and eternal God, show Your mercy to Your humble servants. We put no trust in our own merits. Do not deal with us with Your judgment, but with Your forgiveness; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 15 is “the great resurrection chapter” which is often quoted at funerals because in it, St. Paul presents the fact, nature, and comfort of the resurrection for us as believers in Christ.

First, Paul must establish the *fact* of the resurrection, since then as now, skeptics abound. So, he asks rhetorically, “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (v12). These two facts cannot coexist—that Christ is raised but there is no resurrection of the body. So, which is it? The answer is in v20, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

Now for the *nature* and *comfort* of the resurrection, Paul says: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (v22). Luther explains: “Here St. Paul is still speaking only about those who are Christians. These he wants to instruct and console with this article. For although also the non-Christians must all arise, this will not be to their comfort and joy, since they will arise for judgment and not for life. Therefore, to hear this article does not bring comfort and joy to the world and the ungodly people of today either.... It is not surprising that such people are annoyed to hear of the blessed resurrection; for us, however, it is pure joy, because we hear that our greatest Treasure, over which we rejoice, is already in heaven above, and that only the most insignificant part remains behind; and that He will awaken this, too, and draw it after Him as easily as a person awakens from sleep” (AE 28:114-15).

Let us pray: Almighty and eternal God, show Your mercy to Your humble servants. We put no trust in our own merits. Do not deal with us with Your judgment, but with Your forgiveness; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Our readings today is about *rest*, but not just any kind of rest—it is about *God’s rest*, a specific type of Sabbath, spiritual rest. These verses summarize our lesson (13:18-19): “And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief... (4:11-12) Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

The warning for us in this lesson is that the people of God did not enter the rest of the Promised land because of their disobedience. God has rested from His work of creation and offers us a similar type of a Sabbath (“ceasing”) rest—in that, we *cease* striving to please Him through our own works of the law. Instead, the Word of God, is “living and powerful,” revealing our sin, which is the constant accusation of the law. We enter “His rest” from the law’s accusation when, in faith, we receive the completed work of Christ for our salvation in His death on the cross to pay for our sins. Here our striving of *works* is turned to the striving of *faith*, which looks not to its own works but to the works of another, namely to Christ. Our faith *rests* in His accomplished works for us. Thus, we enter into His rest through faith in Him.

Let us pray: Almighty and eternal God, show Your mercy to Your humble servants. We put no trust in our own merits. Do not deal with us with Your judgment, but with Your forgiveness; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Like the heroes of faith, we too “walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). However, our faith is not baseless or imaginary; instead, it has a specific basis—the very promises of God, secured for us by Christ, and received through faith.

Previously in chapter 6, the writer of Hebrews shows that God did not just make a promise to Abraham that He would bless and multiply him, but He promised on oath by swearing by Himself. Then we are reminded “it is impossible for God to lie” and these words follow for our sake: “¹⁹This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, ²⁰where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus.” God does not take His promises lightly; neither do we.

Therefore, like Abraham, we dwell “as in a foreign country,” but also “as heirs with him of the same promise,” as we seek the same heavenly city “which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Like Sarah, even if we should laugh because the promise seems too good to be true, nevertheless our doubts are replaced by faith in the promise as fulfilled by Christ, so we now “judge Him faithful who had promised.”

God makes many promises to us in His Word, and we know Him to be faithful because He has previously fulfilled many of those promises in Christ. Therefore, we trust Him for the promises that still await fulfillment. Even without seeing those results, our faith holds fast to these promises even in the face of trials and persecution because we consider Him faithful who has promised.

Let us pray: Almighty and eternal God, show Your mercy to Your humble servants. We put no trust in our own merits. Do not deal with us with Your judgment, but with Your forgiveness; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Our God is *indeed* “a consuming fire,” but through faith in Christ, we are not burned. “²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”

Our worship in Christ’s church on earth is focused on Christ because His blood makes all the difference for our faith: “Abel’s blood for vengeance Pleaded to the skies; But the blood of Jesus For our pardon cries” (TLH 158, st. 4).

God’s Word of Law speaks judgment against all wrongdoing and pleads for justice to God as the Judge of all. God’s Word of Gospel speaks grace to all who repent of their wrongdoing and plead for mercy—mercy which comes in “Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” Jesus steps in as a sinless sacrifice to appease the call for justice. Therefore, those who appeal to this blood—the blood of Jesus, “the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel”—receive mercy and grace through faith, instead of judgement.

Through faith in Jesus and the blood of His sacrifice for us on the cross, we are joined to “the great assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,” and look forward to when we will come fully “to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” and “the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Let us pray: Almighty and eternal God, show Your mercy to Your humble servants. We put no trust in our own merits. Do not deal with us with Your judgment, but with Your forgiveness; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The second-to-last Sunday in the Church Year turns our thoughts to Judgment Day, so a reading from the Book of Revelation is most appropriate. In this last chapter of St. John's Revelation, the angel who has shown all those apocalyptic visions to the apostle confirms that the message is true.

And what is the message behind all those visions? First, that Christians will face many trials as we wait for Christ's promised return: persecution from the devil and from the world, and temptations from our own sinful flesh. Second, we are assured that Christ reigns even in the midst of the trials, and that He will certainly come again at just the right time. Third, we are warned not to allow the devil, the world, or our flesh to lead us astray, but to trust in Christ for help now and for perfect deliverance when He comes. And finally, we are comforted, both with the assurance that every enemy of Christ and of Christians will be defeated, and with the blessed vision of the glory of heaven—the glory that awaits all who remain faithful to the end.

Specifically, we're comforted in today's reading with Jesus' promise to come soon, and with His word of blessing for all those who take heed to the warnings and comforts given in the Book of Revelation. We're also comforted by the words of the angel, assuring us that all who keep the words of this prophecy are fellow servants of the holy prophets and of the angels themselves!

The message that judgment is coming serves as an urgent warning for unbelievers, while it serves as both warning and comfort for believers. The angel who revealed the Revelation to John urged him not to seal up the words of the book, but to make them known. If these visions of the end times end up hardening the wicked in their persecution and unbelief, so be it. If they end up strengthening and preserving the righteous in faith and love, may it be so!

Let us pray: O Jesus, preserve us in faith, guide us in love, and defend Your servants as we await Your coming and fervently pray, Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

“Grace to you and peace be multiplied,” proclaims St. Peter in the opening of his First Epistle. Speaking as an ambassador for Christ Jesus, Peter bestows these very things upon the Christians who read and hear and meditate on his words. What greater comfort can the Christian find in this life than to know that our Triune God has arranged everything for our salvation, from beginning to end? From the Father’s election in eternity, to the Spirit’s sanctification in time, who sprinkled us with the justifying blood of Christ that is mixed with the water of Holy Baptism, our God has devoted Himself to helping us in our desperate need, working mightily to save us for time and for eternity.

Since we have been born again and made children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, Peter directs our eyes heavenward, to where our risen Savior reigns, and where our everlasting inheritance awaits. There is comfort and joy to be found in knowing ahead of time how the story ends for us, if, by God’s power and strength, we persevere in faith until the end. The story ends well, in unfading glory, in joy that will never end.

But there is great comfort, too, in knowing that even our present trials are not beyond God’s control. They are part of God’s design to keep us steadfast in the faith by exercising our faith, testing it, purifying it, and causing it to shine. And best of all, these trials are temporary, lasting only a “little while.” How it must drive the devil mad! He persecutes and afflicts us in order to tear us away from the faith. But God uses those very afflictions to drive us closer to Him and closer to His Word, as part of His good and gracious plan to bring us safely into our eternal inheritance.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for all You have done, for all You are doing, and for all You will do that we may receive the salvation of our souls. Grant us peace in every trial, that our faith may be preserved and purified according to Your will; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We Christians have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, which was sprinkled on us in holy Baptism. We have been made holy in God's sight through faith in the precious blood of the Lamb of God. We have received pure, undeserved mercy from God. Therefore, says Peter, we have a solemn duty to lead holy lives that fit with the holy status we have been granted. Even as God, who gave us birth through His Word, is holy, so we are called to be holy in all that we do, "set apart" from the sinful world for the sacred service of the holy God.

Such holiness begins with faith, which is born of God's Word and continually nourished and fed by God's Word, just as babies are nourished with milk. Faith in Christ purifies everything that we do and makes it acceptable to God for Jesus' sake. It makes us into living stones in God's temple, royal relatives of Christ our King and Brother, and priests who offer acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.

Those sacrifices are the holy lives we strive to lead in the world and the works of love with which we serve our neighbor, according to our various vocations. We offer priestly sacrifices to God when we do good to our neighbor, pray for him, defend him, and speak the truth to him about his sin and about God's mercy in Christ. We also offer the priestly sacrifice of praise, and of whole lives dedicated to His service. These sacrifices do not atone for sin; only the sacrifice of Christ accomplished that. They are, instead, offerings of thanksgiving, offered up daily by thankful priests, royal priests, Christians who have been chosen by God and called out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ.

Let us pray: Holy Father, You have set us poor sinners apart and made us holy in Your sight by the holy, precious blood of Your Son. Preserve us in the holy faith and accept our humble sacrifices, that we may honor You with our whole life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Christ suffered for us. He allowed His flesh, at times, to be deprived of food and drink and sleep. He allowed His body to be whipped and beaten and nailed to a cross. He allowed His blood to be shed, to the point of death. He suffered God's wrath in His flesh, all for us, so that we might never suffer God's wrath in our flesh, so that we might be victorious over sin, death, and the devil, through faith in Christ our Lord.

This is the Christ in whom we believe. This is the Christ into whose death we have been baptized, "buried with Him through Baptism into death." For what purpose? So that, as St. Paul writes, "just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). St. Peter urges the same thing, that we should no longer live for earthly pleasures and for sin, but for Him who died for us and rose again, that we should no longer participate in the sinful deeds that unbelievers label as "fun" or as "normal."

You will be ridiculed if you do not go along with the evil deeds of this world. People will speak evil of you if, for example, you keep the Sixth Commandment, honoring marriage and keeping the marriage bed pure. They will mock you and think you are strange if you don't join in their drunken parties, repeat their foul language, or accept their evolutionary lies.

But judgment is coming, Peter warns, and no one will escape. Those who have lived for the flesh and rejected the sound doctrine of God's Word will have to give an account to God. The wisdom of this age says, "Live for the moment!" The wisdom of God cries out, "Live with an eye toward Judgment Day!" Cling to Christ for refuge. Keep watch... and pray!

Let us pray: O Lord Christ, help us in the midst of so many temptations and dangers of this world, that we may escape the judgment of the wicked and be counted among those who are righteous by faith in You. Amen.

Few people understand suffering rightly. They imagine that suffering is always a sign of God's wrath, or that Christians shouldn't have to suffer so much simply because they're Christians. Neither is true.

Christ suffered God's wrath as a punishment for sin—not His sin, but our sin. His suffering made satisfaction for our sins, so that, no matter how much we may suffer, we cannot earn God's favor or make up for our sins in the slightest way, nor should we try. Our suffering does not atone for sin.

But suffering and afflictions may still be punishments for sins—punishments that serve a good and salutary purpose. As the Apology of the Augsburg Confessions says, "Saints are subject to death, and all general afflictions, as 1 Peter 4, 17 says: *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?* And although these afflictions are for the most part the punishments of sin, yet in the godly they have a better end, namely, to exercise them, that they may learn amidst trials to seek God's aid, to acknowledge the distrust of their own hearts... Afflictions are a discipline by which God exercises the saints" (Ap., Art. VI).

Because Christ, by His suffering, has removed God's wrath from believers, and because God tells us that suffering for doing good makes us partakers of Christ's suffering and of Christ's glory, we can rejoice and bear up under the temporary and passing afflictions of this life. The unbeliever, on the other hand, has no such consolation, but will indeed suffer God's wrath and punishment eternally, if he does not repent and turn to Christ in repentance and faith.

Let us pray: O Christ, who suffered for us the bitter pain of the cross and death, have mercy on us and drive us to cling to You alone in all our sufferings, that we may ever rejoice in Your good purpose for us. Amen.

The God who has brought us to faith in Christ, solely by His own working through the Word, now seeks fruits of faith from us. The God who has forgiven and justified us solely by faith now calls upon the righteous to live righteously, to turn away from sinning, to think carefully about how we may devote ourselves to godliness, and then to put it into practice in order to “make our call and election sure.”

Our Lutheran Confessions offer a useful explanation of this: “Peter speaks of works following the forgiveness of sins and teaches why they should be done. They should be done so that the calling may be sure, that is, should they fall from their calling if they sin again. Do good works in order that you may persevere in your calling, in order that you do not lose the gifts of your calling. They were given to you before, and not because of works that follow, and which now are kept through faith. Faith does not remain in those who lose the Holy Spirit and reject repentance. As we have said before, faith exists in repentance” (Ap:XX).

“And since the Holy Spirit dwells in the elect, who have become believers, as in His temple, and is not idle in them, but impels the children of God to obedience to God’s commands, believers, likewise, should not be idle, and much less resist the impulse of God’s Spirit, but should exercise themselves in all Christian virtues, in all godliness, modesty, temperance, patience, brotherly love, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, in order that they may doubt the less concerning it, the more they experience the power and strength of the Spirit within them. For the Spirit bears witness to the elect that they are God’s children” (FC:SD:XI).

Let us pray: Gracious Father, You have worked mightily in us through Your Word to convert us. Continue to work mightily in us, that we may persevere in the faith until the end, produce fruit in keeping with repentance, and lead godly lives here on earth; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

False prophets have always been around, threatening the Christian Church from within; and they will never leave the Church in peace on this earth. St. Peter isn't warning his readers about pagan prophets, but about those prophets, preachers, and teachers who claim to be Christian, but who bring a message that corrupts or contradicts the true Christian faith.

False prophets have multiplied over the centuries, causing the visible Christian Church to divide and splinter countless times. Some are openly wicked and immoral, supporting abortion and sexual deviancy, teaching that there is salvation apart from faith in Christ, openly denying the truthfulness of God's Word. Others shun such things, but still teach falsehood about the person of Christ, the ministry of the Word, the Real Presence of Jesus' body and blood in the Sacrament, justification by faith alone, etc. They all have their own followers. They all are successful in their deceptions among certain groups of people who "do not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10).

But St. Peter assures us that God is storing up judgment for all these false teachers. They will not get away with their deceptions for much longer. Even now, Christ preserves a little flock on this earth that hears the voice of the Good Shepherd and adheres to the truth of His Word. He "knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations," just as He knows how and when to mete out judgment to those who lead His sheep astray.

Hold onto the precious treasure of God's Word. Pray for those who proclaim it rightly. Support them. Defend them. Listen to them. For in the midst of so much falsehood, God will continue to provide faithful preachers and teachers for His people, even if they seem few and far between.

Let us pray: Almighty God, preserve Your little flock and defend it against the assaults of Satan. Grant wisdom to Your children, that we may discern between truth and error, and make us bold to adhere to Your Word at all times; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Jesus tells us at the beginning and end of today's reading, "I am coming quickly." How does the church respond to this promise? "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'" The church is Christ's bride. Christ "loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25-27). Having been washed by water and the Word in Holy Baptism, and clothed with Christ's perfect righteousness, the church eagerly awaits the return of her Bridegroom.

The Bridegroom also brings His reward to give to everyone according to his work. With these words Christ wants to spur His bride on to good works. The faith that eagerly expects Christ's return brings forth good fruit and Christ promises to reward that good fruit in the life of the world to come.

To all who do His commandments He promises "the right to eat of the tree of life," as well as the right to "enter through the gates into the city"—both of which are pictures of the bliss, joy, and security of everlasting life. St. John summarizes the commandments which we are to do in 1 John 3:23, "This is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment."

Outside the gates of the city are the dogs, sorcerers, the sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. They have not obeyed the commandment of faith in Christ and love toward neighbor. They chose to remain in their sins because they believed and lived according to the lie that Christ would not return so they could live according to the desires of their flesh. To the faithful and unfaithful alike Christ says, "I am coming quickly." For the faithful it is joyful news. For the unfaithful it is a call to repent, believe in the coming One, and bear good fruit.

Let us pray: Give us hearts that eagerly expect your coming, O Lord, increasing faith and good works in us. Amen.

We are most certainly in the last days of this world. Scoffers walk according to their own lusts—for physical pleasure, power over others, prestige in their own eyes, riches, and the like. They imagine there is no end to this world, no judgment, and no return of Christ, if they believe there is a Christ at all. They see the fact that Christ has not yet returned as slackness. But what scoffers see as slackness, the eyes of faith see as patience. God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”—contrition over their sins and faith in the gospel—so that they may escape the wrath to come when the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up and dissolved with fire and fervent heat.

Those who live lives of repentance—daily contrition over their sins and faith in the gospel—look forward to Christ’s return. “We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” In the new heavens and earth there will be no unrighteousness—no sin, no temptation, and no consequences of sin. The unrighteousness of this world will be destroyed in fire. The unrighteous themselves—unbelievers who do not have Christ’s righteousness by faith—will be eternally punished.

Since we look forward to the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells, how should we live? “Be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.” We will be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless, by living lives of repentance. God justifies us by faith in Christ and gives us Christ’s perfect righteousness, which is without spot and blameless. Knowing all this is to come when Christ returns, be steadfast in faith. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by receiving and being fed by His Word and Sacraments, looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, give us your Holy Spirit to live as those who look for the new heavens and earth where righteousness dwells. Amen.

Jude reminds us that in the church there are “ungodly men, who turn the grace of God our God into lewdness.” God’s grace is turned into lewdness—or an excuse for lewdness—when it is said that God forgives all our sins regardless of repentance. God’s grace is also turned into a license for lewdness on the other side—when repentance and forgiveness are proclaimed but the new life in Christ is not encouraged, or it is said that it is impossible because of the sinful nature. These ungodly men defile the flesh with sexual perversions, reject authority, and speak evil of civil magistrates. They serve only themselves, their own bellies, and their own egos.

To warn us against such men, Jude presents several examples of God’s judgment. He begins with God’s people. After bringing Israel out of Egypt in the exodus, God destroyed those who refused to believe in Him. Even the angels who rebelled and “did not keep their proper domain” have been reserved in everlasting chains for the final judgment. Sodom and Gomorrah serve as a type of the final judgment on the Last Day upon all who reject God’s word as Cain rejected God’s warning. Like Balaam these men seek profit. Like Korah they seek prestige. God foretold their destruction in His Word, and even popular books outside of Scripture like 1 Enoch condemn them. From such men we must flee, lest they turn our hearts away from love of God and others toward license to sin.

As the world becomes more depraved and more ungodly men arise to lead more astray, Jude encourages you to build yourselves up in the most holy faith by adhering to God’s Word, praying in the Holy Spirit, and rooting yourselves each day in God’s love for you in Christ Jesus. Speak the truth to those around you to pull them out of the fires of sin, but do so carefully lest you yourself are tempted. Do all things with faith in Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and keep you faultless—righteous by faith—until His return in glory.

Let us pray: Keep us from stumbling, O Lord, and build us up in the most holy faith, that we may be faultless on the Last Day. Amen.

“The Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.” The Antichrist—the one whom St. Paul describes in 2 Thessalonians 2—had not yet come when John wrote these words. But already in John’s day antichrists—teachers who denied that God’s Son had come in the flesh and paid for the sins of the world to justify believers—had come. They came from the church. These false teachers went out *from* the church but they were not *of* the church. Jesus foretold such men, calling them wolves in sheep’s clothing. They mutilate Scripture to fit their own teaching. They prophesy, cast out demons, and do wonders in Jesus’ name, yet do not know Him by faith. They deceive themselves and their hearers.

John’s hearers have no need of these men to teach them. He tells them, “Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning.” Having heard the Gospel from Christ’s apostle, they are to remain in what they heard from John, who heard the gospel from Christ. Through this gospel they received the Holy Spirit, whom John calls “the anointing.” “The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you.” He doesn’t mean this in an absolute sense so that they need no one ever to teach them. He himself had taught them the gospel. Christ Himself “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). Since John’s hearers had received the Holy Spirit through His teaching and preaching, they were equipped to spot anti-Christian teachings and abide in Christ’s gospel alone.

The world is still full of antichrists. Some have gone out from the church and revealed themselves. Others are still within the visible church, wearing the sheepskin as they teach a different doctrine than Christ’s while using Christ’s name. It is vital for all Christians to abide in God’s Word and Christ’s doctrine, because there the Spirit teaches us the truth, leading us into faith in His promises and faith’s end: eternal life.

Let us pray: Give us Your Holy Spirit through Your Word, O Lord, that we abide in You and endure in faith. Amen.

All who believe in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins are children of God. All believers look forward to the day when Christ our elder brother is revealed—the day of His glorious appearing to judge the living and the dead. For as much as Scripture doesn't tell us about everlasting life, we know “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” On that day we will be made like Christ. The image of God which Adam and Eve lost for mankind—the true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness—will be entirely renewed. Looking forward to this completed restoration, the children of God purify themselves with the power the Holy Spirit gives.

The children of God purify themselves by abiding in Christ. Abiding in Christ by faith, they do not sin. This does not mean that the children of God never sin. It means they do not willfully sin and revel in it. The children of God know and believe the Gospel that Christ “was manifest to take away our sins.” Since Christ came to take away sins, those who have been born of God through Holy Baptism and faith practice righteousness each day even as Christ is righteous. If we choose to sin, we willfully reject the rebirth God has worked in us and align ourselves with the devil who chose to sin from the beginning.

Children of God still have the sinful flesh with its wicked passions and evil desires, but they put these to death each day by living in the Gospel. They know that God forgives their sins for Jesus' sake. They know they are righteous in God's sight, covered with Jesus' perfect righteousness. They also believe that the purpose the Son of God was manifested was “that He might destroy the works of the devil” in them. Jesus destroys the devil's work in us, not by the coercion of the law, but by the gospel which reminds us each day that we are children of God, sins forgiven, and temples of the Holy Spirit. As children of God, we purify ourselves, resist temptation, and practice righteousness by loving one another.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, as You have made us Your children in Holy Baptism, grant that we may practice righteousness today in the joy of Your Gospel. Amen.

“And by this we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him.” But how do we know we are of the truth? Verse 18 tells us: “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” Our love for others serves as a consolation and assurance to ourselves that we are of the truth, in much the same way that our willingness to forgive those who sin against us is an external sign that God has forgiven us. We forgive others because God has graciously forgiven us. So it is with our love. We love others because God first loved us by sending His only-begotten Son into the flesh to bear our sins and be our Savior.

The love the apostle encourages is not just in word and tongue, but in deed and truth. St. Paul describes this love in 1 Corinthians 13: “Love suffers long and is kind, does not envy, does not parade itself, isn’t puffed up, doesn’t behave rudely, doesn’t seek its own, isn’t provoked, thinks no evil, and rejoices in the truth.”

But who loves like this all the time? Who doesn’t fall short of such love? Who loves all their neighbors as they love themselves at all times? The Christian’s love for others, like their love for God, is still incomplete in this life. We don’t always love as we should. When we do love our neighbor, how often is there more we could do for them to help them? If we honestly evaluate our love, we see it as, at best, incomplete.

So John writes, “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.” God forgives our lack of love and gives us new hearts that love others. He reminds us that our incomplete love for others is pleasing in His sight because it is done by faith in His Son. He gives us His Holy Spirit so that we might love others as we love ourselves. That love benefits them and serves as an external sign that we have received God’s love in the gospel.

Let us pray: Increase our faith, O Lord, so that, as we grow in our appreciation for Your love for us, we may grow in true love for those around us. Amen.

“We are of God” (v. 6). What a brief yet beautiful statement of our identity in Christ Jesus! How do we know we are of God? Jesus tells the unbelieving Jews in John 8:47, “He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore, you do not hear, because you are not of God.” Hearing God’s words spoken through His Son is what makes one “of God.” Hearing includes believing as Jesus says in John 5:24, “He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life.” Being “of God” we hear the apostles’ teaching as well, since it was given to them by Christ. “He who knows God hears us,” John writes. Reading God’s Word given to us in Holy Scripture, hearing preaching that faithfully explains God’s Word, and meditating on God’s Word which we read and hear is how the Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts and makes us “of God.”

Those who are not “of God” are of the devil. They listen to the spirit of error which speaks through false prophets and antichrists. Being of the devil, they listen to his word, though he dresses it up in scriptural sounding language as a wolf would don a sheepskin in order to deceive the flock. But being “of God” through faith in Christ, the children of God overcome the spirit of error. The children of God hear God’s Word and test every spirit—every teacher, book, article, video, sermon, and the like—according to the pure and clear words of Jesus and His apostles written in Holy Scripture. They overcome falsehoods and antichrists because the One who is in them—Christ—is greater than he who is in the world.

Those who are “of God” also love one another in the way God defines love (1 Cor. 13). Being “of God” by hearing and believing God’s love for them in Christ Jesus, they love their neighbors. Those who are born of God hear His Word, by faith believe it, and in that faith see their neighbor through eyes of true Christian love.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, grant that we always hear Your word with believing hearts, and grant that we, meditating on Your great love for us in Christ Jesus, may grow in love for one another. Amen.