

Walking Together in the Word

Devotions on the Weekly Scripture Readings for January 2023 (Year A)

The purpose of the Chapel Devotion Project is to encourage individuals and families to make prayer and devotional time in God's Word a regular part of their daily lives. We believe many good things will come from your intentional study and reflection of God's Word:

- Your relationship with God and with others will grow and be strengthened.
- Study of the Scripture and hymns for the upcoming weekend will enhance your worship.
- You will come to the Lord daily in prayer, bringing your praise, thanks, and requests to Him.

How to Use These Devotions

Each week contains five pages of devotional material. How you choose to use the material is up to you. You could study one reading or one page a day. You might read several portions every other day. You may use the short order of worship provided below. Use the material in the way that best fits you and your family.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

DEVOTION and REFLECTION

PRAYERS and THE LORD'S PRAYER

LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.
Amen.

or

LUTHER'S EVENING PRAYER

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Leader: The almighty and merciful God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us.
All: Amen.

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Devotions and supporting material written by Jim Marriott, Pastor Ted Laesch, and Mary Laesch.

Walking Together in the Word

January 2–January 7, 2023

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, January 8.

Baptism of our Lord

The Gospel: Matthew 3:13–17

The Baptism of Jesus

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Devotion on the Gospel

If you were to back up a few verses in Matthew, you’d see that John was preaching in the wilderness: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God has come near” (Matthew 3:2). With John’s preaching comes repentance and baptism. John’s baptism is a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

So why in the world is Jesus coming to be baptized by John? What is going on here? Jesus doesn’t need to repent. Jesus doesn’t need forgiveness. Jesus has no need for John’s baptism. John’s baptism is for repentant sinners; so why does Jesus go?

Jesus goes down to where the sinners are and takes on their sin, takes on their shame, takes on their suffering, takes on their baptism. Martin Luther suggests that it is at His baptism that Jesus began to take the sins of the world on Himself. The sinless one, the Savior, undergoes what was reserved for sinners.

This is God’s way of salvation. It begins with Jesus’ birth, where He makes Himself vulnerable, humble, and weak. It continues with Jesus’ baptism, where He makes Himself vulnerable, humble, and weak. It foreshadows the cross, where Jesus dies as one vulnerable, humble, weak. Jesus becomes just like you, out of love for you, to save you.

*“This is my Son, whom I love;
with him I am well pleased.”*

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Who is revealed at Jesus’ baptism? Look especially at verses 16-17.

How does your Baptism connect you with Christ and His death and resurrection? Read Romans 6:3-4.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Who is the servant spoken of in these verses? Which verses especially clue you in as to who Isaiah is prophesying about?

The Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 42:1-9

The Servant of the Lord

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;

I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.

2 He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.

3 A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

4 he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.

In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”

5 This is what God the Lord says—
the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
who gives breath to its people,
and life to those who walk on it:

6 “I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.

I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles,

7 to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

8 “I am the Lord; that is my name!
I will not yield my glory to another
or my praise to idols.

9 See, the former things have taken place,
and new things I declare;
before they spring into being
I announce them to you.”

*A bruised reed he will not
break, and a smoldering
wick he will not snuff out.*

The Epistle: Romans 6:1-11

6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? **2** By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? **3** Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— **7** because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. **9** For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. **10** The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The Psalm: Psalm 29

Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

3 The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord thunders over the mighty waters.

4 The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is majestic.

5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

6 He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.

7 The voice of the Lord strikes
with flashes of lightning.

8 The voice of the Lord shakes the desert;
the Lord shakes the Desert of Kadesh.

9 The voice of the Lord twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.

And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

10 The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
the Lord is enthroned as King forever.

11 The Lord gives strength to his people;
the Lord blesses his people with peace.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Verse to Remember:
Romans 6:8

How does this psalm
describe the great
power of our God?

This psalm was
traditionally used at
Baptisms. God's voice
and flood (water) join
together in Baptism to
wash away our sins.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

This hymn is a favorite of many. Why do you think that is? Look online for a recording and listen. Sing along!

The Hymn: Beautiful Savior

Beautiful Savior,
King of creation,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I'd love Thee,
Truly I'd serve Thee,
Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.

Fair are the meadows,
Fair are the woodlands,
Robed in flow'rs of blooming spring;
Jesus is fairer,
Jesus is purer;
He makes our sorr'wing spirit sing.

Fair is the sunshine,
Fair is the moonlight,
Bright the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter,
Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels in the sky.

Beautiful Savior,
Lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor,
Praise, adoration,
Now and forevermore be Thine!

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LSB 537

*Beautiful
Savior*

*King of
creation*

*Son of God
and
Son of Man*

Faith + Life Connections

Look up your Baptism birthday and put it on the calendar. Celebrate everyone's Baptism today by lighting a candle and having some birthday cake! Read the account of Jesus' baptism and Romans 6:3-4. Read about Baptism in *Luther's Small Catechism*. Baptism works forgiveness of sins and salvation for all who believe.

Matthew 3:13-17

The Old Testament prophets spoke about Jesus long before He was born. Isaiah lived around 700 years before Jesus' birth! As you read these verses, look for words and phrases that describe Jesus and His ministry.

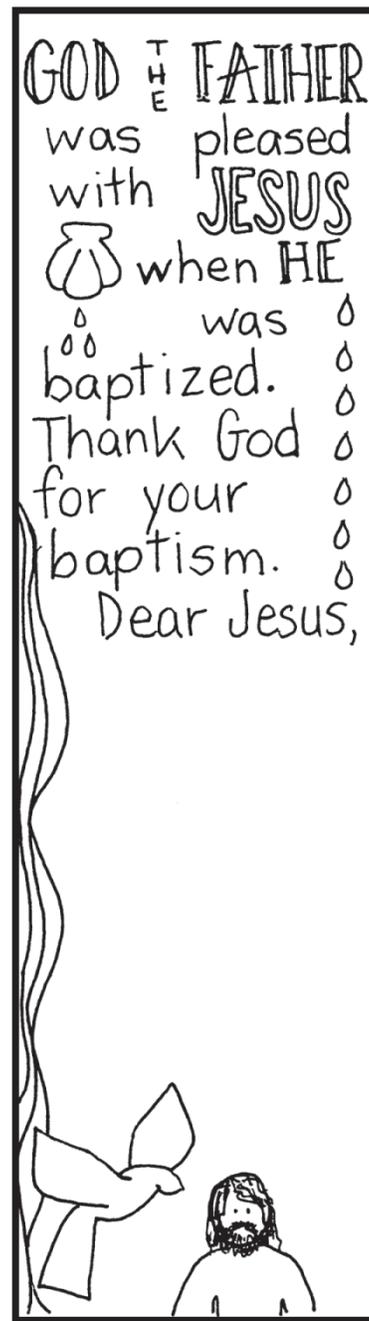
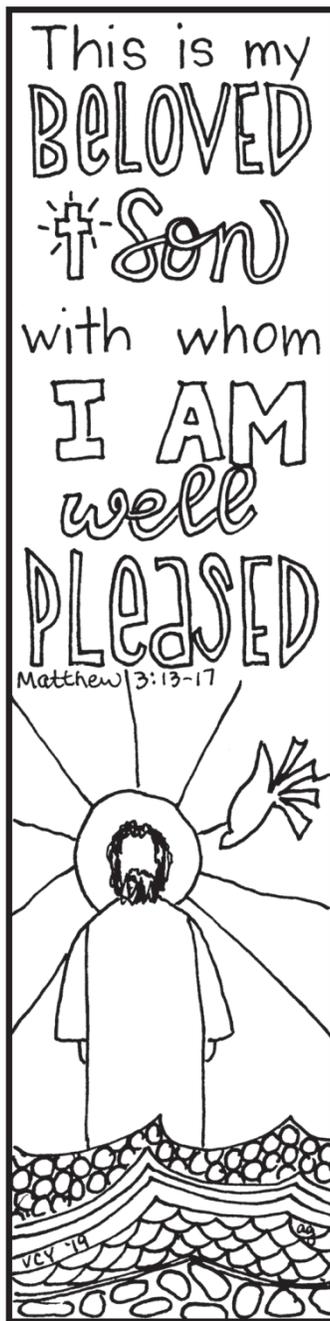
Isaiah 42:1-9

The hymn "Beautiful Savior" paints a beautiful picture of who Jesus is and what He does for us. As you listen to the hymn, use crayons, paints, or markers to draw what you hear. Write some of the words on your picture as well.

LSB Hymn 537

Memorize:

"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him." Romans 6:8



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Devote Yourselves to Prayer *Colossians 4:2*

Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.

Walking Together in the Word

January 9–January 14, 2023

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, January 15.

Epiphany 2

The Gospel: John 1:29–42a

John Testifies About Jesus

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ 31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

32 Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33 And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” 37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” 39 “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. 40 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

Devotion on the Gospel

Wow, what a grand introduction! John the Baptist looks to Jesus and proclaims: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

The Jews knew about lambs—lambs who take away sins. Lambs were extremely important to them. Every day in the temple lambs would be sacrificed. And it wasn’t the runt or the crippled of the lambs—only the best, the ones with no spot or blemish, were sacrificed. Some of the blood of the lamb was poured on the altar, the rest of the blood was sprinkled on the people. And the priest would declare, “It is in the blood of the lamb that your sins are forgiven.”

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Who is this Lamb? He is Jesus. He is the Lamb of God, the sacrificial Lamb, who bears the sins of the world. He bears my sins. He bears your sins. Every sin of the tongue, every sin of the eye, every sin of the ear, every sin of the hands and feet—He bears those sins all the way to the cross, where His blood is shed and poured out.

And we hear: Your sins are forgiven! Christ has offered His blood for you. He has shed His blood to forgive your sins. Thanks be to God!

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

What convinced John the Baptist that Jesus was God’s Chosen One?

Why did the Israelites sacrifice lambs? Of what did the lamb sacrifice remind them? See Exodus 12:21-27.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

How does God make it clear in this prophecy about Jesus that He would come to save all people?

*Verse to Remember:
Isaiah 49:6*

We know that the congregation in Corinth was not perfect. How can Paul call them saints? How can we be called saints?

The Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 49:1-7

Servant of the Lord

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations:

Before I was born the Lord called me;
from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.

2 He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me into a polished arrow
and concealed me in his quiver.

3 He said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will display my splendor."

4 But I said, "I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing at all.

Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand,
and my reward is with my God."

5 And now the Lord says—
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant
to bring Jacob back to him
and gather Israel to himself,

for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord
and my God has been my strength—

6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.

I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

7 This is what the Lord says—
the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—
to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation,
to the servant of rulers:

"Kings will see you and stand up,
princes will see and bow down,
because of the Lord, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

The Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— 6 God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Psalm: Psalm 40:1-11

I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.
4 Blessed is the one
who trusts in the Lord,
who does not look to the proud,
to those who turn aside to false gods.
5 Many, Lord my God,
are the wonders you have done,
the things you planned for us.
None can compare with you;
were I to speak and tell of your deeds,
they would be too many to declare.
6 Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—
but my ears you have opened—
burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.
7 Then I said, "Here I am, I have come—
it is written about me in the scroll.
8 I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart."
9 I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly;
I do not seal my lips, Lord,
as you know.
10 I do not hide your righteousness in my heart;
I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help.
I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness
from the great assembly.
11 Do not withhold your mercy from me, Lord;
may your love and faithfulness always protect me.
Praise the Lord.

*Blessed is the one
who trusts in the Lord*

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

These eleven verses of Psalm 40 are rich with meaning for God's people. Pick a few verses to meditate and pray on today.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

This song is a beautiful description of our Savior Jesus, Lamb of God. As you read verse three, ponder how the Lamb of God calls us to be His lambs.

The Hymn: Lamb of God *LSB 550*

Your only Son, no sin to hide,
But You have sent Him from Your side
To walk upon this guilty sod,
And to become the Lamb of God. Refrain

Refrain
O Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God,
I love the holy Lamb of God!
O wash me in His precious blood,
My Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Your Gift of love they crucified,
They laughed and scorned Him as He died:
The humble King they named a fraud,
And sacrificed the Lamb of God. Refrain

I was so lost, I should have died,
But You have brought me to Your side
To be led by Your staff and rod,
And to be called a lamb of God. Refrain

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O Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God,
I love the holy Lamb of God!
O wash me in His precious blood,
My Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Faith + Life Connections

The Agnus Dei is a part of the liturgy in the worship service that is sung before the Lord's Supper. *Agnus Dei* is Latin for "Lamb of God." Look online and listen to this, and listen for it this Sunday. The words are: "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us." Talk about why we sing this before taking Holy Communion.

John 1:29-42a

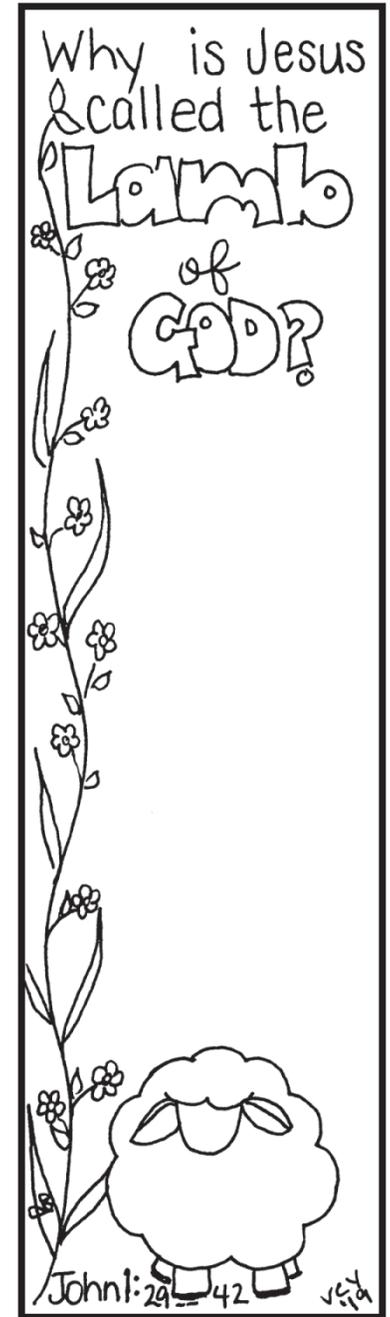
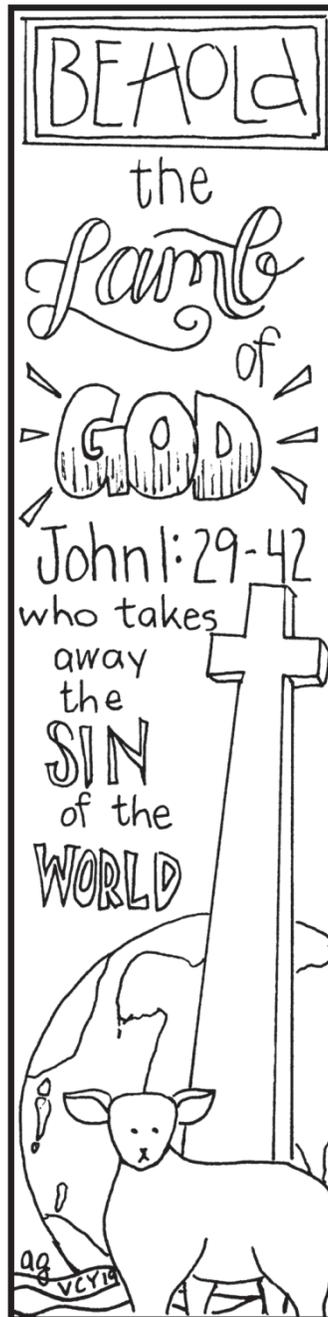
Light a candle as you read these verses from Isaiah that prophesy about the Messiah, Jesus. How is Jesus the light of the world? How is He a light for the Gentiles—for us?

Isaiah 49:1-7

The psalms often talk about human emotions, including joy, sadness, even anguish, and how God comes to help us and give us hope in Him. People of all times and ages are uplifted by the psalms. Look online and listen to the song "40" by U2.

Psalms 40:1-11

Memorize: "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6



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Devote Yourself to Prayer *Colossians 4:2*
Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.

Walking Together in the Word

January 16–January 21, 2023

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, January 22.

Epiphany 3

The Gospel: Matthew 4:12–25

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— 14 to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: 15 “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. 24 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. 25 Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Devotion on the Gospel

Do you remember how you came to know Jesus? I’m guessing somebody told you about Him. Maybe it was a parent when you were just a child. Maybe it was a friend. Maybe it was a special teacher. Maybe there was more than one person. But somehow, someone told you about the Lord and through that good word, God brought you to faith.

Matthew reminds us that John the Baptist was one of the first to get the word out about Jesus. He appeared in the wilderness, preaching, preparing the way of the Lord, calling people to repent, for the Kingdom of God was at hand.

Some of the people who heard that Good News were the disciples. They were then called by Jesus to go and tell that Good News to others. Jesus called them to be “fishers of men”—to get the word out about the Savior.

It is not just the twelve disciples who were called to tell about Jesus. All who believe in Him and follow Him are called to do so. Through our sharing, God comes to people and brings them to faith. All we do is tell the Good News. God does everything else. It’s God’s Word. It’s His story. And it’s His power that works in it. And it does work. It works mightily—one person telling another—one at a time—one by one by one. God is in control. Everything we fear is in God’s control. God loves you and will allow nothing to separate you from that love. So, “Do not be afraid.”

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

What was it about Jesus that caused Peter, Andrew, James, and John to leave their fishing business and follow Him? What caused the crowds to go after Him? What causes us to listen to His Word to us today?

Think of one person this week with whom you can share the Good News of Jesus.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Verse to Remember:
Isaiah 9:2

The Second Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

2 The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

3 You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.

4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.

The Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

*The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.*

What was the
problem that was
going on in Corinth?
What does Paul
remind the
Corinthians?

The Psalm: Psalm 27:1–9

The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,

it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

3 Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.

4 One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.

5 For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.

6 Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.

7 Hear my voice when I call, Lord;
be merciful to me and answer me.

8 My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”
Your face, Lord, I will seek.

9 Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.

Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.

*The Lord is my light
and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?*

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

This psalm, which speaks of God's strength and help in time of trouble, is a good one to put to memory. Try memorizing a verse or two a day this week.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Balm of Gilead was a rare perfume that was used medicinally in Bible times. It was named for the region of Gilead, where it was produced.

Jeremiah 8:22 talks about Balm of Gilead—not even this ointment could cure the people’s sin-sickness. Only the Messiah could do that.

The Hymn: There Is a Balm in Gilead *LSB 749*

Refrain

*There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul.*

Sometimes I feel discouraged
And think my work’s in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again. Refrain

If you cannot preach like Peter,
If you cannot pray like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus
And say He died for all. Refrain

Don’t ever feel discouraged,
For Jesus is your friend;
And if you lack for knowledge,
He’ll ne’er refuse to lend. Refrain

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*Don’t ever feel discouraged,
For Jesus is your friend.*

Faith + Life Connections

Plan a meal of fish (or fish sticks) to enjoy for dinner tonight as you read about Jesus calling the fishermen Peter, Andrew, James, and John as His first disciples. What did Jesus mean when He told them, “I will send you out to fish for people”? How do we “fish for people” today?

Matthew 4:12-25

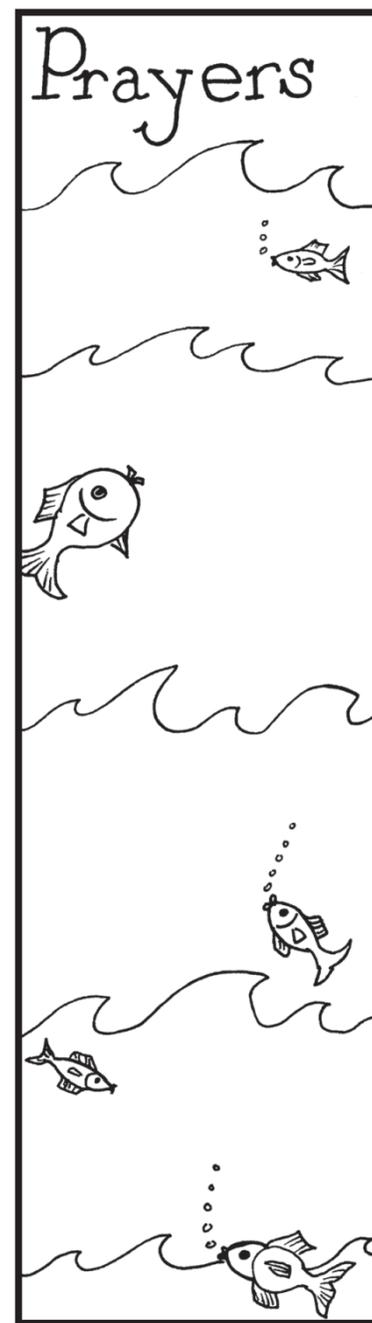
Try to take a walk (inside or outside) in darkness tonight. How did you feel? How far did you get without light? Read this section from Isaiah again, and look back at the Gospel. Do you see how Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy? How is Jesus our light?

Isaiah 9:1-4

Read Psalm 27 again together and talk about the ways that God helps us when we are in trouble and in need. Why can we depend on Him? He is powerful and faithful.

Psalm 27:1-9

Memorize: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”
Isaiah 9:2



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Devote Yourself to Prayer *Colossians 4:2*

Throughout the week, write prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and requests on slips of paper and place them in your prayer bowl. Take turns praying when you gather for devotions.

Walking Together in the Word

January 23–January 28, 2023

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, January 29.

Epiphany 4

The Gospel: Matthew 5:1–12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them. He said:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Devotion on the Gospel

“Bless you!” We hear that sometimes, don’t we? If you happen to sneeze around a group of people, you might get a few unfriendly looks, but you will also undoubtedly get a number of “Bless you’s”. And if you have a cold or allergies, you’re going to hear that blessing over and over. But beyond that, we really don’t hear that word “blessed” very often.

Not so in the Bible! In the Bible, God is blessing people all over the place. Blessing after blessing you see in Scripture, from Genesis through Revelation. And here, at the beginning of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, you don’t see just one blessing, but nine blessings! The Beatitudes, we call them—one blessing right after another.

What special and important blessings they are! These blessings are descriptions of Jesus’ disciples as they live and witness in God’s kingdom. Even more than that, the Beatitudes are exclamations—more—they are celebrations of those who follow Jesus. It is as if Jesus is saying, “How blessed are the meek!” Or “How blessed are the pure in heart!” Or “How blessed are the peacemakers!”

How blessed... are you as you live as His disciple in His kingdom!

Blessed are you . . .

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Jesus began His Sermon on the Mount by describing how His followers will be blessed in this life and the next.

Why does Jesus say we are blessed when people insult and persecute us for our faith?

Pick a Beatitude, think about it, talk about it.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Through the prophet Micah, God reminded His people of the many ways that He had saved and blessed them.

God has blessed us, too, in so many ways. But do we sometimes get tired of doing what is right and serving others? In Christ, there is forgiveness and renewal.

*Verse to Remember:
Micah 6:8*

The Old Testament Reading: Micah 6:1-8

Listen to what the Lord says:

“Stand up, plead my case before the mountains;
let the hills hear what you have to say.

2 “Hear, you mountains, the Lord’s accusation;
listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth.

For the Lord has a case against his people;
he is lodging a charge against Israel.

3 “My people, what have I done to you?
How have I burdened you? Answer me.

4 I brought you up out of Egypt
and redeemed you from the land of slavery.

I sent Moses to lead you,
also Aaron and Miriam.

5 My people, remember
what Balak king of Moab plotted
and what Balaam son of Beor answered.
Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord.”

6 With what shall I come before the Lord
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

*Act justly and love mercy
and walk humbly
with your God.*

The Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:18–31

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” 20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

The Psalm: Psalm 15

Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?

Who may live on your holy mountain?

2 The one whose walk is blameless,
who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from their heart;

3 whose tongue utters no slander,
who does no wrong to a neighbor,
and casts no slur on others;

4 who despises a vile person
but honors those who fear the Lord;
who keeps an oath even when it hurts,
and does not change their mind;

5 who lends money to the poor without interest;
who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

Whoever does these things
will never be shaken.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Why do you think that Jesus' death on the cross seems foolish to unbelievers?

How is the cross the power and wisdom of God for believers?

This psalm may have been used as a prayer as God's people entered the tabernacle.

How do we prepare for worship?

How does God prepare us?

**Notes,
Thoughts,
Questions**

*How can you describe
Jesus' love for you?*

The Hymn: Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me

LSB 683

Jesus, Thy boundless love to me
No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
Unite my thankful heart to Thee,
And reign without a rival there!
Thine wholly, Thine alone I am;
Be Thou alone my constant flame.

O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell, but Thy pure love alone;
Oh, may Thy love possess me whole,
My joy, my treasure, and my crown!
All coldness from my heart remove;
My ev'ry act, word, thought be love.

This love unwearied I pursue
And dauntlessly to Thee aspire.
Oh, may Thy love my hope renew,
Burn in my soul like heav'nly fire!
And day and night, be all my care
To guard this sacred treasure there.

In suff'ring be Thy love my peace,
In weakness be Thy love my pow'r;
And when the storms of life shall cease,
O Jesus, in that final hour,
Be Thou my rod and staff and guide,
And draw me safely to Thy side!

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*Jesus,
Thy
boundless
love
to
me*

Faith + Life Connections

Jesus began His Sermon on the Mount by talking about being blessed. How are you blessed? Make a “Blessing Jar.” Cut strips of paper and writing blessings on them. Leave strips near the jar to add more blessings through the week. Take out strips at devotion time and thank God for those blessing.

Matthew 5:1-12

God reminded His people about the great things He had done for them. Look in a Bible storybook and read about the Exodus—how God rescued His people from Egypt and led them through the Red Sea. What has God done for you?

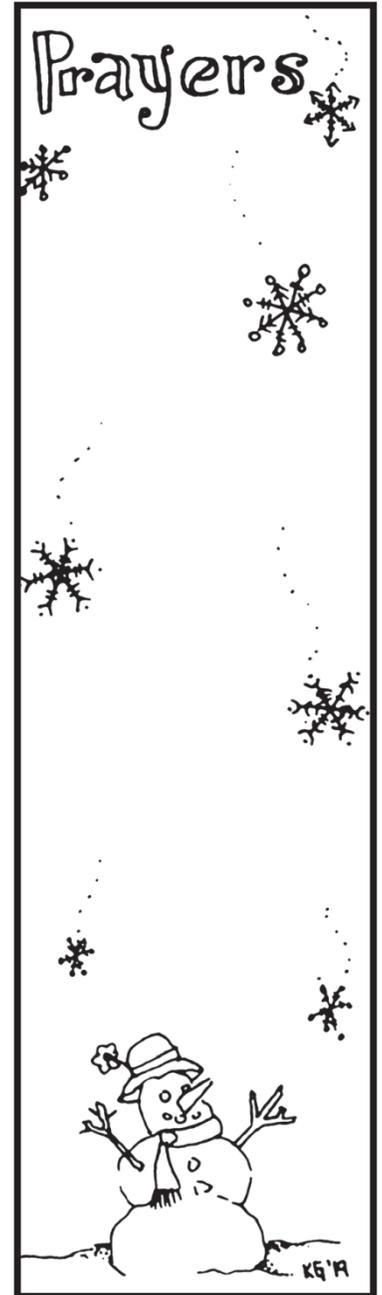
Micah 6:1-8

Who is the smartest person you know? God is wiser. In fact, He’s all-knowing and all-powerful. He’s also our Creator, Savior, and Friend.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Memorize:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6:8



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Devote Yourself to Prayer

Colossians 4:2

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