

Walking Together in the Word

Devotions on the Weekly Scripture Readings for July, 2023

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 Pastor Ted Laesch and Mary Laesch.

Walking Together in the Word

June 26–July 1, 2023

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, July 2.

Proper 8

The Gospel: Matthew 10:34-42

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,

a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

36 a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

37 “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

40 “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

Devotion on the Gospel

You’re a loser. Hey, don’t get mad at me! That’s what Jesus says. You’re a loser. Did you catch that in the text? “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” Jesus calls you to be a loser.

You’re not the only one. When Jesus called His disciples, He called them to be losers too. He called them to intentionally lose stuff for Him. Remember when Jesus called James and John? Jesus came to them and said, “Follow me.” And they left their nets, their fishing business, their father even, and followed Him. They were called to lose their job to follow Jesus.

There were others called to be losers. Matthew lost his tax table and all that money. The blind man in Mark 10 lost his cloak—the cloak that gathered the coins he received while begging. The woman at the well in John 4 lost her water jar because Jesus had given her spiritual, living water.

And it’s true for us too. When Jesus calls us to follow Him, He calls us to lose all that hinders our relationship with Him. And when we lose those things, we find great joy. We lose our life for Him—and He gives us new life.

St. Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 5: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” In Christ, the old life has been lost! The new life—new life in Christ—has been found. And that gives us great joy!

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Verse to Remember:
Matthew 10:39*

*What might you lose
by being a Christ-
follower? What will
you gain?*

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Hananiah was a false prophet who made the Israelites believe in a lie, leading them to defy God's will. Both Hananiah and the Israelites suffered for this. How does false teaching hurt God's people?

How does knowing God's commandments, His Law, help you recognize sinful behavior? Give an example.

The Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 28:5-9

Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord. 6 He said, "Amen! May the Lord do so! May the Lord fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the Lord's house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon. 7 Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: 8 From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. 9 But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the Lord only if his prediction comes true."

The Second Reading: Romans 7:1-13

Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? 2 For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. 3 So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

4 So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. 5 For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. 6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

The Psalm: Psalm 119:153-160

Look on my suffering and deliver me,
for I have not forgotten your law.

154 Defend my cause and redeem me;
preserve my life according to your promise.

155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek out your decrees.

156 Your compassion, Lord, is great;
preserve my life according to your laws.

157 Many are the foes who persecute me,
but I have not turned from your statutes.

158 I look on the faithless with loathing,
for they do not obey your word.

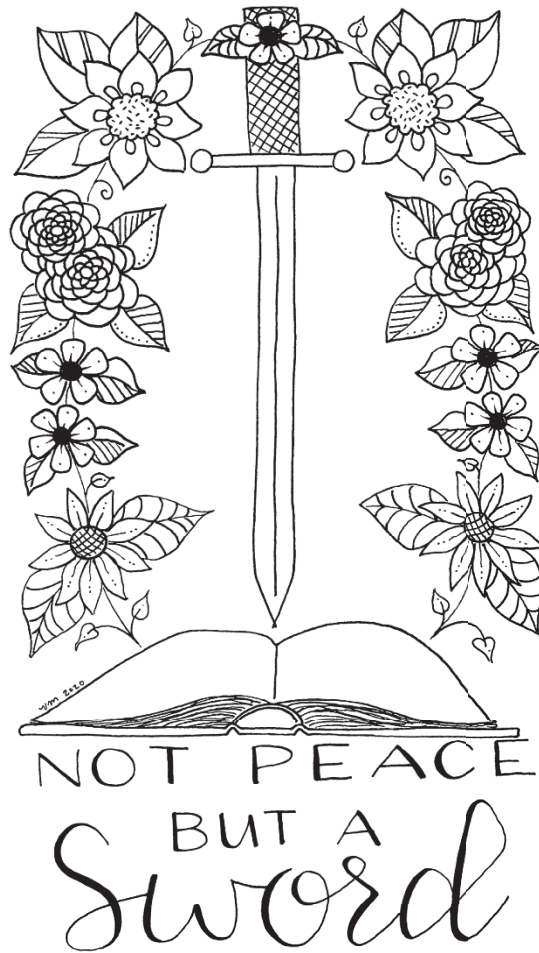
159 See how I love your precepts;
preserve my life, Lord, in accordance with your love.

160 All your words are true;
all your righteous laws are eternal.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Compare the faithless
with the faithful.*

*What do the faithless
do? What does God
do for the faithful?*



Notes,
Thoughts,
Questions

*What does the Savior
do for those He calls?*

The Hymn: “Come, Follow Me,” the Savior Spake *LSB* 688

“Come, follow Me,” the Savior spake,
“All in My way abiding;
Deny yourselves, the world forsake,
Obey My call and guiding.
O bear the cross, whate’er betide,
Take My example for your guide.

“I am the light, I light the way,
A godly life displaying;
I bid you walk as in the day;
I keep your feet from straying.
I am the way, and well I show
How you must sojourn here below.

“My heart abounds in lowliness,
My soul with love is glowing;
And gracious words My lips express,
With meekness overflowing.
My heart, My mind, My strength, My all,
To God I yield, on Him I call.

“I teach you how to shun and flee
What harms your soul’s salvation,
Your heart from ev’ry guile to free,
From sin and its temptation.
I am the refuge of the soul
And lead you to your heav’nly goal.”

Then let us follow Christ, our Lord,
And take the cross appointed
And, firmly clinging to His Word,
In suff’ring be undaunted.
For those who bear the battle’s strain
The crown of heav’nly life obtain.

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“Come
Follow
Me”
the
Savior
spake

Faith + Life Connections

Who do you love? Mom, Dad, grandparents, siblings, friends? Who do you love most? God wants you to love Him more than anyone or anything. Why? He is your Creator, your Father, your Savior, and your Friend.

Matthew 10:34-42

Do you have rules at your house? Name one. Why do you think your family has that rule? God gave us rules to follow, the Ten Commandments, so that we know what is right and what is wrong. God's rules help us live better lives. They also help us know when we mess up—and remind us that we need Jesus to be our Savior.

Romans 7:1-13

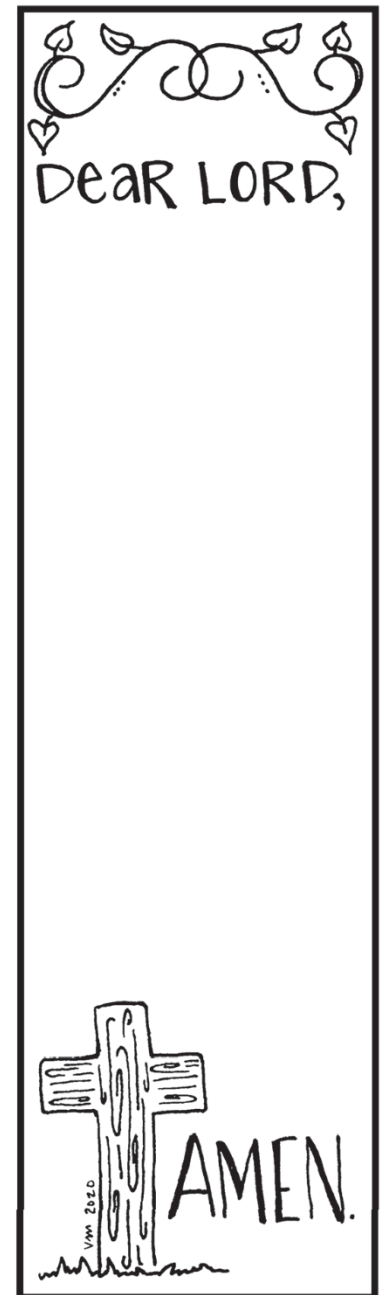
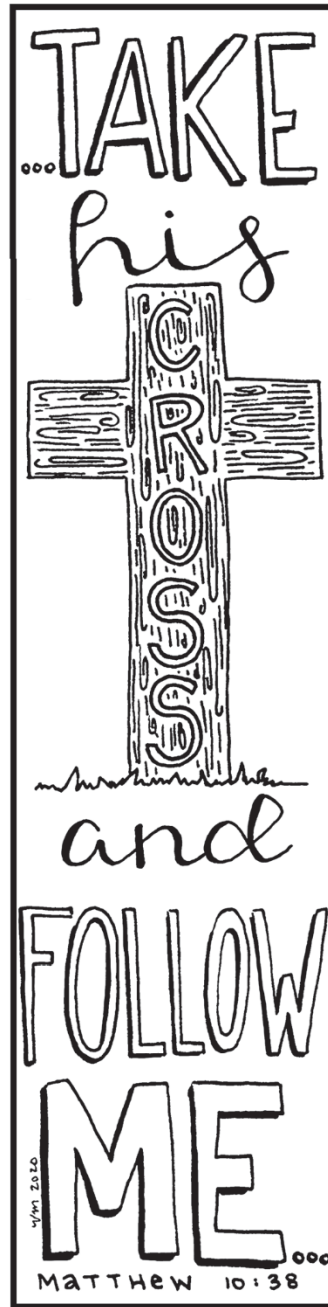
Jesus calls to you, "Come, follow Me." Talk about what it means to follow Jesus. How is your life different when you follow Him? How does Jesus help you to "take up your cross and follow"?

The Hymn

Memorize:

"Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."

Matthew 10:39



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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

July 3–July 8, 2023

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, July 9.

Proper 9

The Gospel: Matthew 11:25–30

25 At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

27 “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Devotion on the Gospel

Weary? Oh, you got it. Burdened? Check. Fatigued? Yup. Exhausted? You could say that. Running on empty? Yeah, kind of like my old Chevy Nova shuddering as it was trying to sip the last drop of gas from the tank.

So many are burdened, tired, weary, fatigued, exhausted. But COVID-19 has canceled vacations, trips, time away, flights, cruises, family reunions, excursions—so many things that might help a little bit with us being burdened, tired, weary, fatigued, exhausted.

But ultimately, a vacation or trip or an excursion won’t give us rest. Not real rest. That kind of rest—rest for the spiritually weary, relief for the spiritually burdened—can only come from Jesus.

And Jesus promises that rest! He promises rest for the weary. He promises relief for the burdened. He promises rest and relief for the soul. And the rest that Jesus gives, that rest for the soul, is eternal rest.

Because Jesus carried the burden of our sin to the cross, our souls are relieved. The burden and yoke that He offers is His own righteousness. And so He gives that wonderful invitation: “Come to me, and I will give you rest.” And we find our rest in Him.

*Come to me, all you
who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.*

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Verse to Remember:
Matthew 11:28

*What burdens are you
carrying right now?
Write them down.
Then go to your Lord
in prayer over them.
Let Him give you rest
for your soul.*

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Long before Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, the prophets spoke of the King who would come in peace to proclaim peace to the nations.

Read Matthew 21:1-11.

What does this passage say about trying to overcome sin by our own efforts?

Who comes to our rescue?

The Old Testament Reading: Zechariah 9:9-12

The Coming of Zion's King

9 Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!

Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,

righteous and victorious,

lowly and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim

and the warhorses from Jerusalem,

and the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

11 As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

12 Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope;

even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.

The Epistle: Romans 7:14-25a

14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

*Thanks be to God, who delivers me
through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

The Psalm: Psalm 145:1-14

- I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- 2 Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- 3 Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
- 4 One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
- 5 They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
- 6 They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- 7 They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
- 8 The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
- 9 The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
- 10 All your works praise you, Lord;
your faithful people extol you.
- 11 They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
12 so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.
The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.
- 14 The Lord upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.

*The Lord upholds
all who fall and lifts up
all who are bowed down.*

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Who told you about
the greatness of the
Lord?*

*To whom will you
proclaim the mighty
acts of our great God?*

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*How does this hymn
remind you of our
nation's past?*

*How does it remind
you of your future?*

The Hymn: Lift Every Voice and Sing *LSB* 964

Lift ev'ry voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty.
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun
Of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast'ning rod
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our parents sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered;
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee;
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God, true to our native land.

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Faith + Life Connections

Fill a backpack with books and let everyone take a turn carrying it around for a few minutes. Then take the books out and carry the backpack. What a difference! Jesus takes the heavy burdens of our sin and worry and replaces them with His forgiveness, peace, and rest.

Matthew 11:25-30

Share a time when you knew that something was wrong to do, but you did it anyway. We are tempted to sin every day. Jesus invites us to come to Him and ask for help to resist the temptation to sin. When we do sin, He offers forgiveness to all who confess their sins to Him.

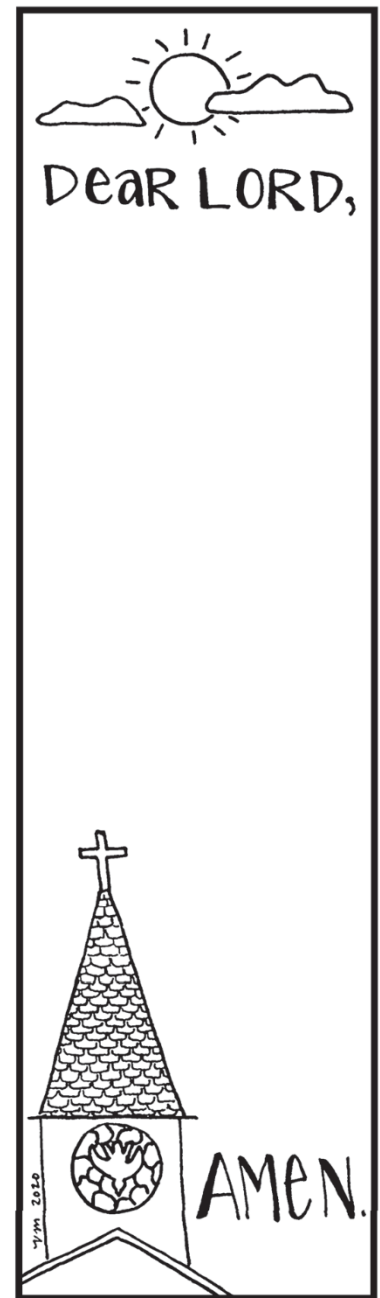
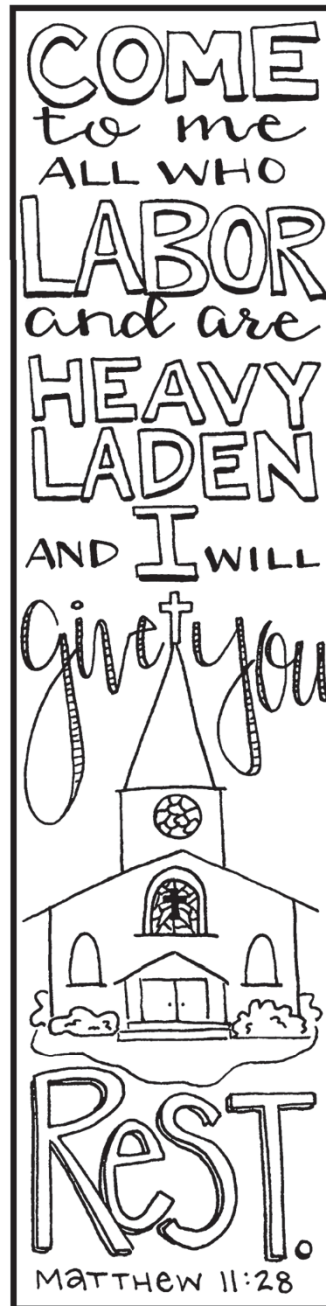
Romans 7:14-25a

Make a poster of Psalm 145. Write down some of the mighty acts and great deeds of God. Add to the list throughout the week, praising God every day for His greatness.

Psalm 145:1-14

Memorize:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28



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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

July 10–July 15, 2023

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, July 16.

Proper 10

The Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear."

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Devotion on the Gospel

Isn't it amazing how optimistic the farmer is? Despite the fact that the bad soils outnumber the good soil three to one, there is an unbelievable optimism in this story. The farmer sows his seed - everywhere! Generously, abundantly, hands full of seed! Throwing it into the most unlikely places. And some goes in the field, and some of the path, and some on the rock, and some between the thorns.

And it doesn't matter that the odds are against the farmer. Remember how the parable ends? With a bumper crop! The Word of God yields a harvest. God is optimistic in spreading His Word because He knows that His efforts will not fail. He knows that even a little bit of seed can accomplish great things and produce a mighty harvest.

In fact, the Lord has planted that seed of His Word in you and in me. In that Word, He shows His love and salvation. He shows us Jesus and the cross. He shows us His death and resurrection. He shows us heaven and the welcome we will one day receive. He sows His seed generously, abundantly! It's a gift from God. And we're invited to receive that seed and through the Spirit's work, let it grow into a great harvest.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Who sowed the seed of the Gospel in you? The Holy Spirit made it grow into faith.

How will you sow the seed of the Gospel this week?

What a generous God we have! Say a prayer of thanks to God for the faith He has planted in you. Ask Him to strengthen your faith, so that it grows into a great harvest.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Verse to Remember:
Isaiah 55:11

*Have you ever
thought about what it
means to be a child of
God?*

*What is the
inheritance that we
will receive as
children of God?*

The Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13

As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,

11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth:

It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

12 You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.

13 Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper,
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.

This will be for the Lord's renown,
for an everlasting sign,
that will endure forever."

The Epistle: Romans 8:12-17

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

For those who are led by the Spirit
of God are the children of God.

The Psalm: Psalm 65:9-13

9 You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.

The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so you have ordained it.

10 You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.

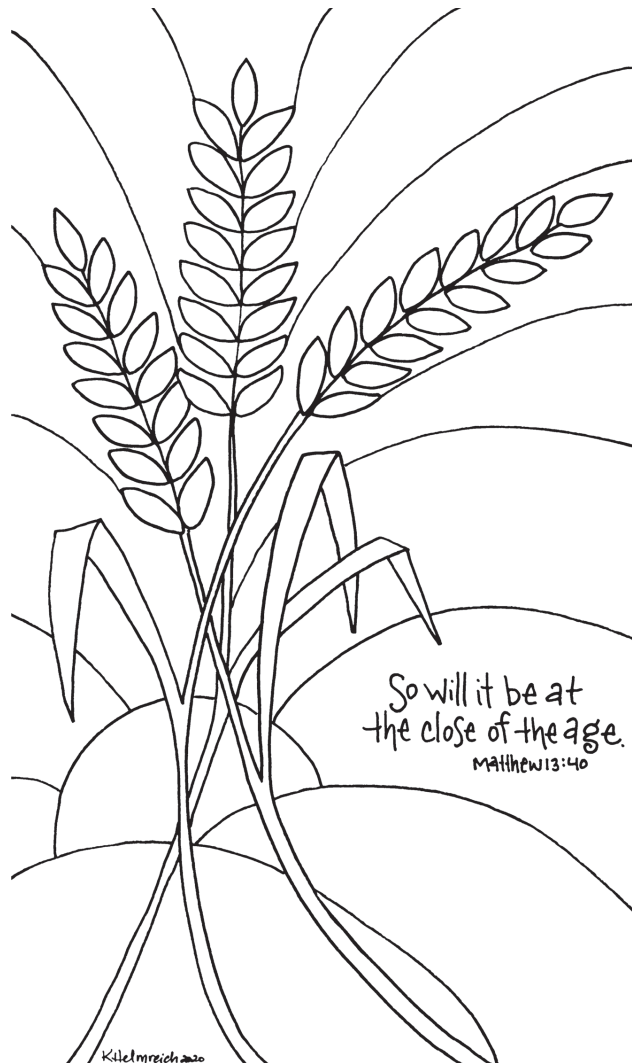
11 You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.

12 The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.

13 The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

We don't always think about the everyday ways that God cares for His creation. Take some time today to thank God for the sun, the rain, the wind. How gracious is our God!



Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Read or sing this hymn as you look again at the Gospel reading for this week. Then look at the visual representation of the Gospel in the illustration on this page. How wonderful that God has given us so many ways to hear, see, and receive the truth of His Word.

The Hymn: Almighty God, Your Word is Cast LSB 577

Almighty God, Your Word is cast
Like seed into the ground;
Now let the dew of heav'n descend
And righteous fruits abound.

Let not the sly satanic foe
This holy seed remove,
But give it root in ev'ry heart
To bring forth fruits of love.

Let not the world's deceitful cares
The rising plant destroy,
But let it yield a hundredfold
The fruits of peace and joy.

So when the precious seed is sown,
Life-giving grace bestow
That all whose souls the truth receive
Its saving pow'r may know.

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Faith + Life Connections

Take a walk to see a garden or take a drive to see farmland. Talk about how plants grow from small seeds that a gardener or farmer sows in the ground. When we hear God's Word, it is planted in our heart. The Holy Spirit makes that faith grow!

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

As you water your indoor or outdoor plants this week, read the passage from Isaiah. The plants need water to grow. We need God's Word to grow in faith.

Isaiah 55:10-13

Talk about what it means to be someone's son or daughter—someone's child. What do your parents do for you? What do your parents give to you? Now think about what it means to be God's child. What does God do for you? What does He give you?

Romans 8:12-17

Memorize:

"So is My word that goes out from My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Isaiah 55:11



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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

July 17–July 22, 2023

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, July 23.

Proper 11

The Gospel: Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

24 Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

27 “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

28 “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

29 “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

37 He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

40 “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Devotion on the Gospel

What a mess! There is bad seed growing right alongside the good. Weeds germinate just as well as wheat. And often you can’t tell the weeds from the wheat until it’s too late to do much about it. What a mess!

Perhaps it makes the Christian want to cry out with the Psalmist: “How Lord, O Lord, how long will the wicked be jubilant?” As we look at these weeds among the wheat we ask, “Lord, did You not sow good seed in Your field?” What a mess! The world, the church, even our own lives can be such a mess sometimes. There’s evil running rampant this side of heaven, and where there is evil, there’s a mess.

But the beautiful thing this parable teaches us is that it is God’s mess. Not that He made the mess, but that He’s promised to deal with it.

And He does. He deals with it with His love and with his forgiveness and with his mercy. He promises growth for the wheat. He promises final victory in the end. The good wheat is harvested and brought into His barn. He lovingly brings His own children home. He tenderly gathers to Himself His wheat, His Church, His child...you.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Did you notice how patient the owner of the field is? Why do you think God is patient with sinners? See 2 Peter 3:9.

It can be difficult to see beyond the mess of this sinful world. But God promises that one day, He will make all things new again. See Revelation 21:1–5.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

People turn to many people and things to help them. Is there anyone or anything that can do what God has done and continues to do for us? No, not one.

*Verse to Remember:
Romans 8:26*

The Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 44:6-8

The Lord, Not Idols

6 “This is what the Lord says—

Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty:

I am the first and I am the last;

apart from me there is no God.

7 Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it.

Let him declare and lay out before me

what has happened since I established my ancient people,

and what is yet to come—

yes, let them foretell what will come.

8 Do not tremble, do not be afraid.

Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago?

You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me?

No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.”

The Epistle: Romans 8:18-27

Present Suffering and Future Glory

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that[a] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

The Psalm: Psalm 119:57-64

You are my portion, Lord;

I have promised to obey your words.

58 I have sought your face with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.

59 I have considered my ways
and have turned my steps to your statutes.

60 I will hasten and not delay
to obey your commands.

61 Though the wicked bind me with ropes,
I will not forget your law.

62 At midnight I rise to give you thanks
for your righteous laws.

63 I am a friend to all who fear you,
to all who follow your precepts.

64 The earth is filled with your love, Lord;
teach me your decrees.



Notes, Thoughts, Questions

When the Promised Land was divided up into portions for the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi's portion was the Lord Himself. (See Numbers 18:20 and Deuteronomy 10:9.)

Deuteronomy 32:9 says that the Lord's portion is His people.

How does this describe the special relationship between God and His people?

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*How does Satan try to
pull us away from
God?*

*How does God protect
us from the evil one?*

The Hymn: Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray

LSB 663

Rise, my soul, to watch and pray;
From your sleep awaken!
Be not by the evil day
Unawares o'ertaken;
For the foe,
Well we know,
Is a harvest reaping
While the saints are sleeping.

Watch against the devil's snares
Lest asleep he find you;
For indeed no pains he spares
To deceive and blind you.
Satan's prey
Oft are they
Who secure are sleeping
And no watch are keeping.

Watch! Let not the wicked world
With its lies defeat you
Lest with bold deceptions hurled
It betray and cheat you.
Watch and see
Lest there be
Faithless friends to charm you,
Who but seek to harm you.

Watch against yourself, my soul,
Lest with grace you trifle;
Let not self your thoughts control
Nor God's mercy stifle.
Pride and sin
Lurk within,
All your hopes to shatter;
Heed not when they flatter.

But while watching, also pray
To the Lord unceasing.
God protects you day by day,
Strength and faith increasing,
So that still
Mind and will
Shall unite to serve Him
And forever love Him.
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Faith + Life Connections

Go outside and pull some weeds in your yard or garden. As you're weeding, talk about what weeds do to good grass, plants, and flowers. In this sinful world, there is evil. But Jesus will return one day to remove sin and evil forever so that we can live in perfect joy and peace with Him forever.

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Isaiah 44:8 says, "Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one." Look online for the song "No, Not One (There's Not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus)." Sing it together!

Isaiah 44:6-8

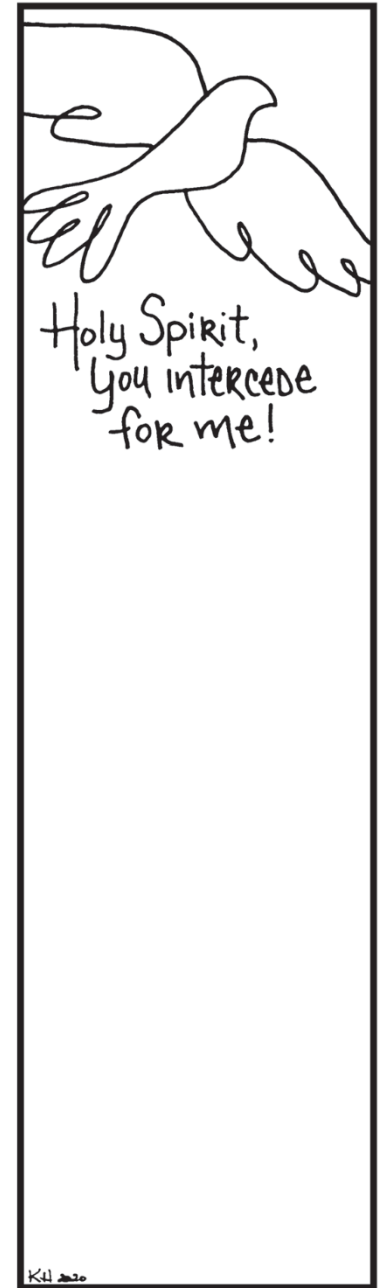
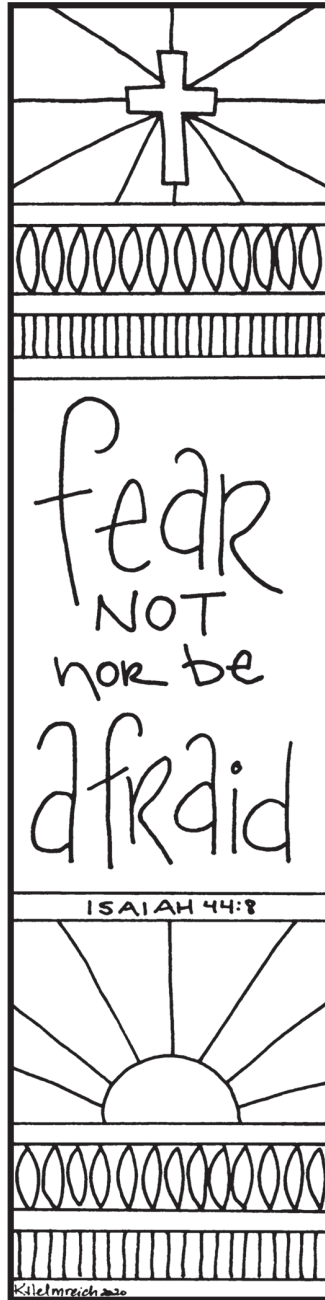
God invites us to pray to Him about everything. But sometimes it's hard to know what words to pray. God promises to help us. The Holy Spirit searches our hearts and prays for us.

Romans 8:18-27

Memorize:

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans."

Romans 8:26



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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

July 24–July 29, 2023

This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, July 30.

Proper 12

The Gospel: Matthew 13:44–52

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

The Parable of the Net

47 “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

51 “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

52 He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Devotion on the Gospel

A hidden treasure in a field. A pearl of great price. Treasures so valuable that everything was sold to get them. And the meaning of the parables is clear. Jesus Himself is the priceless treasure of our lives. Jesus’ sacrificial love has made Him our most treasured possession. There is nothing more precious. There is nothing more valuable. There is nothing that compares. As the hymn says: “Jesus, priceless treasure, source of purest pleasure, truest friend to me.”

I wonder, though, how often we see Him as a treasure? How often is He number one? How often is He the first priority in our lives? After all, there are so many other “treasures” that grab our attention. There’s always something bigger, better, newer, nicer. A lot of other “treasures” grab our attention.

But Jesus is our greatest treasure! His is a treasure of eternal life, salvation, sins forgiven, blessing, and grace. His is a treasure of wine and bread, body and blood given and shed for us. His is a treasure of water and Word, becoming His child in Baptism. What a treasure!

And when the treasure of Jesus Christ is our priceless treasure, we come to understand that not only is He our priceless treasure, but we are His priceless treasure! For you and me, Jesus sold everything. He laid down His life for you. You are worth that much to Jesus. He loves you that much that He gave up everything for you—you, His priceless treasure.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

After reading Jesus’ parables about the kingdom of heaven, how would you describe its worth? Can you think of a modern-day example to describe it?

Just as the man and the merchant gave up everything for the treasure in the field and the pearl, Jesus gave up His life for you. You are that precious to Him. How precious is He to you?

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

Why did God choose the Israelite people to be His people? Why does He choose us to be His?

*Verse to Remember:
Romans 8:28*

The Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 7:6-9

6 For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

7 The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

The Epistle: Romans 8:28-39

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Psalm: Psalm 125

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be shaken but endures forever.

2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the Lord surrounds his people
both now and forevermore.

3 The scepter of the wicked will not remain
over the land allotted to the righteous,
for then the righteous might use
their hands to do evil.

4 Lord, do good to those who are good,
to those who are upright in heart.

5 But those who turn to crooked ways
the Lord will banish with the evildoers.

Peace be on Israel.

Notes, Thoughts, Questions

God's love and protection for His people is rock-solid, as a mountain. He will never fail you.



Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*What is "the one thing
needful"? Jesus taught
Martha this lesson.
See Luke 10:38-42.*

The Hymn: One Thing's Needful

LSB 536

One thing's needful; Lord, this treasure
Teach me highly to regard.
All else, though it first give pleasure,
Is a yoke that presses hard!
Beneath it the heart is still fretting and striving,
No true, lasting happiness ever deriving.
This one thing is needful; all others are vain--
I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain!

Wisdom's highest, noblest treasure,
Jesus, is revealed in You.
Let me find in You my pleasure,
And my wayward will subdue,
Humility there and simplicity reigning.
In paths of true wisdom my steps ever training.
If I learn from Jesus this knowledge divine,
The blessing of heavenly wisdom is mine.

Nothing have I, Christ, to offer,
You alone, my highest good.
Nothing have I, Lord, to proffer
But Your crimson-colored blood.
Your death on the cross has death wholly defeated
And thereby my righteousness fully completed;
Salvation's white raiments I there did obtain,
And in them in glory with You I shall reign.

Therefore You alone, my Savior,
Shall be all in all to me;
Search my heart and my behavior,
Root out all hypocrisy.
Through all my life's pilgrimage, guard and uphold me,
In loving forgiveness, O Jesus, enfold me.
This one thing is needful; all others are vain--
I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain!

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Faith + Life Connections

What's the most expensive thing you own? What's the most expensive thing you'd like to own? Jesus is worth so much more! Everything on this earth will break, rot, wear out. But life with Jesus is forever.

Matthew 13:44-52

What do you think of when you think of treasure? Gold, jewels? Money? Did you ever think of yourself as a precious treasure? You are! You are precious to your family, but you are even more precious to God. You are so precious to Jesus that He died for your sins so you can live with Him forever in heaven.

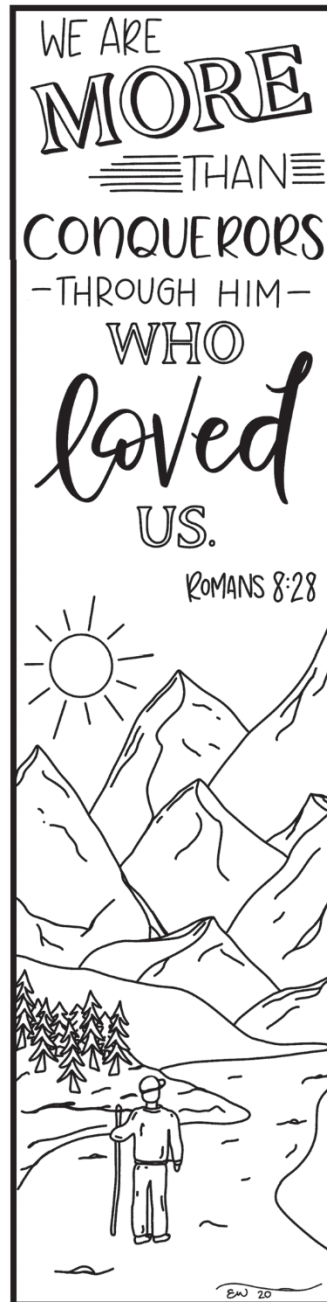
Deuteronomy 7:6-9

Read Romans 8:38-39 again. What can separate you from God's love? Nothing! God has made you His child, and there is nothing that will ever take you away from Him. Hooray!

Romans 8:28-39

Memorize:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28



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