

# *Walking Together in the Word*

Devotions on the Weekly Scripture Readings for September 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

August 28–September 2, 2023

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

## Proper 17

### The Gospel: Matthew 16:21–28

21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” 23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. 28 “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

### Devotion on the Gospel

Isn’t it ironic? Here’s Peter, who just confessed that Jesus was greater than John the Baptist, than Elijah, than Jeremiah—who just confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Here he is, taking Jesus aside like a little boy and rebuking Him: Never, Lord! You will not suffer. You will not go to a cross. You will not die. I won’t allow it!

“Get away from me, Satan!” Oh, what harsh words Jesus has for Peter! But Jesus heard the voice of Satan in those well-intentioned words of Peter. He had heard similar words before when He was being tempted by the devil in the wilderness. And He recognized those words for what they were. For if Jesus had listened to Peter, God’s very plan of salvation would have been destroyed. Satan strikes at the very heart of God by striking at the heart of God’s plan for our redemption.

Thank God Jesus wouldn’t have anything to do with Peter’s plan. There’s going to be no wavering—no backing off His mission. Jesus will listen to His Father and reject the easier call of Satan. And so, in love, Jesus takes our sin and pours out His forgiveness. Jesus takes our faults and pours out His love. Jesus takes our guilt and pours out His peace. Jesus takes our shame and pours out His grace.

It’s not Peter’s plan, it is God’s plan. It is God’s plan of salvation—a plan accomplished by a perfect life, a sacrificial death, and a victorious resurrection. And He accomplished His plan of salvation for you.

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*When did the disciples “see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom”? See John 20.*

*The devil came at Jesus again to tempt Him, hoping to derail God’s plan to save the world. But Jesus wouldn’t give in. Jesus knows about temptation. And so, when we are tempted, we can call out to Him for help to resist. And in the times we fail, we can give thanks that He didn’t.*

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*The prophet Jeremiah faced hatred and persecution because of the message he brought to God's people. How does God comfort and strengthen Jeremiah?*

*Verse to Remember:  
Romans 12:10*

### The Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 15:15-21

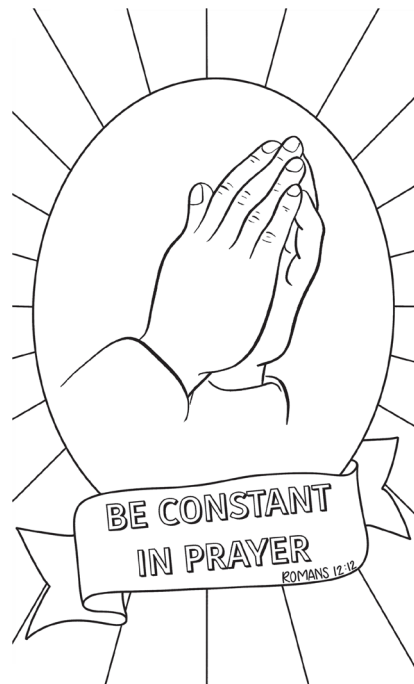
15 Lord, you understand; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering—do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for your sake. 16 When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty. 17 I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation. 18 Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails. 19 Therefore this is what the Lord says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. 20 I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you," declares the Lord. 21 "I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel."

### The Epistle: Romans 12:9-21

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## The Psalm: Psalm 26

- 1 Vindicate me, Lord,  
for I have led a blameless life;  
I have trusted in the Lord  
and have not faltered.
- 2 Test me, Lord, and try me,  
examine my heart and my mind;
- 3 for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love  
and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.
- 4 I do not sit with the deceitful,  
nor do I associate with hypocrites.
- 5 I abhor the assembly of evildoers  
and refuse to sit with the wicked.
- 6 I wash my hands in innocence,  
and go about your altar, Lord,
- 7 proclaiming aloud your praise  
and telling of all your wonderful deeds.
- 8 Lord, I love the house where you live,  
the place where your glory dwells.
- 9 Do not take away my soul along with sinners,  
my life with those who are bloodthirsty,
- 10 in whose hands are wicked schemes,  
whose right hands are full of bribes.
- 11 I lead a blameless life;  
deliver me and be merciful to me.
- 12 My feet stand on level ground;  
in the great congregation I will praise the Lord.



## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Faced with false accusations, David calls on the Lord to examine his heart and actions. We may have the same prayer when we are falsely accused. God knows us, inside and out.*

Notes,  
Thoughts,  
Questions

*This hymn gives many reasons for following the Savior. Highlight the ones that are especially meaningful to you.*

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”~  
Your  
Savior

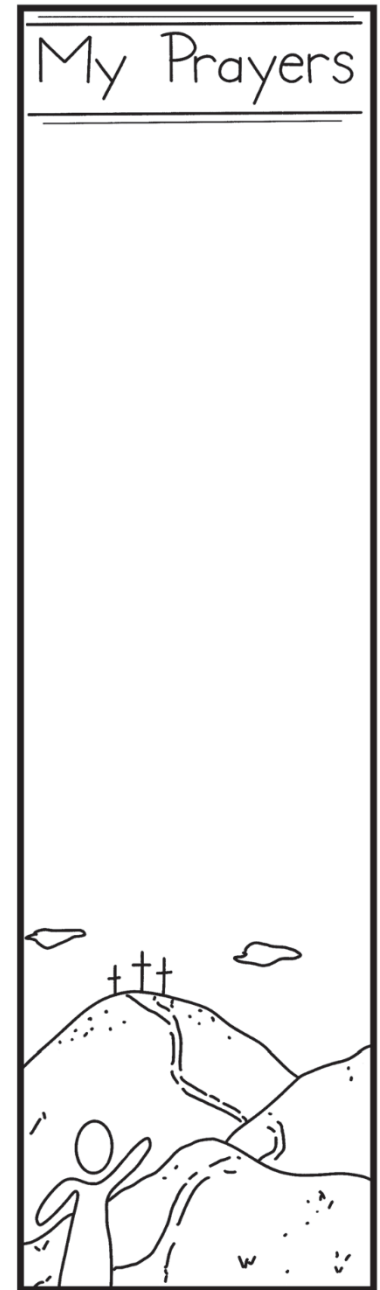
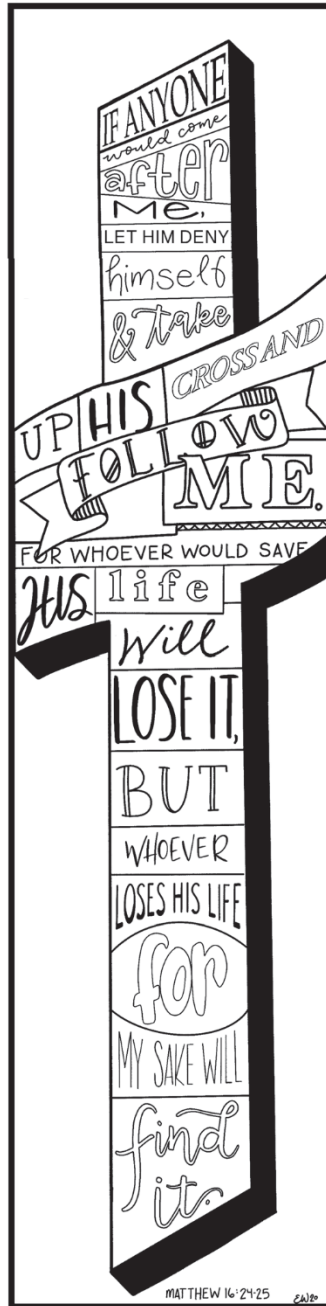
# Faith + Life Connections

“I just don’t get it!” Have you ever said those words? Sometimes we don’t understand what someone is telling us. Peter didn’t get it. He didn’t want Jesus to suffer. He didn’t understand that Jesus had to suffer and die to pay for our sins. He had to learn to trust God’s plan and follow Jesus. So do we.  
*Matthew 16:21-28*

Jeremiah the prophet loved God’s Word. He knew that it fed him and made his faith strong. Spread two squares of graham cracker with cream cheese to make a sweet “book.” Add raisins for words. As you eat it, read Jeremiah 15:16 and thank God for His nourishing Word.  
*Jeremiah 15:15-21*

As you read this section from Romans, highlight the instructions that God gives us for how to live with others. What difference do you think it would make to live like this?  
*Romans 12:9-21*

**Memorize:**  
Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.  
*Romans 12:10*



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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

September 4–September 9, 2023

*This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, September 10.*

## Proper 18

### The Gospel: Matthew 18:1–20

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. 3 And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

6 “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7 Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! 8 If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

10 “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. [11]

12 “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13 And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. 14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

15 “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

18 “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

19 “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*The disciples seemed to be continually discussing who was the greatest. What did Jesus mean when He told His disciples that they must change and become like little children?*

*What are some characteristics of a child-like (not a childish) faith?*

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Is there someone  
with whom you need  
to reconcile? Jesus  
has shown you how.  
He will help you.*

*What did God expect  
the prophet Ezekiel  
to do when he saw  
someone sinning?*

*Do we ever turn a  
blind eye to sin?  
What should we do  
instead?*

## Devotion on the Gospel

Someone sins against us, hurts us, offends us...what do we do?

We have some options! We could pout about it, wear a long face, throw a pity party. It's tempting to pout about it.

We could just try to avoid it and let it fester. We could grumble and gripe and walk around with a chip on our shoulder. It's tempting to let it fester.

We could get angry and get even. Revenge seems to come so naturally. Anger and resentment and revenge are so tempting.

But Jesus gives another option - a better option - and for the Christian, the only good option. Jesus says: I want unity and harmony and love in my church. So this is what you are to do. When someone sins against you, go to him. Don't pout. Don't let it fester. Don't get revenge. Go to him and work it out. It's the only way to bring harmony and peace and unity and restoration and reconciliation to the church.

Jesus shows us how, you know. He gives the ultimate example. Jesus took His own words, "go to him" and He came. He came to us. He came to us who were sinners. He came to Bethlehem as a baby. And then He went to Calvary to die. He came to us. And He brought about a restoration - the greatest restoration the world has ever known - a peace and a unity between God and man.

By His coming, we have been restored. By His coming, we are forgiven. By His coming, we are reconciled.

## The Old Testament Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-9

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. 8 When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. 9 But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved.

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

### The Epistle: Romans 13:1-10

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. 4 For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. 8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

### The Psalm: Psalm 32:1-7

1 Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered.  
2 Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.  
3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.  
4 For day and night your hand was heavy on me;  
my strength was sapped  
as in the heat of summer.  
5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."  
And you forgave the guilt of my sin.  
6 Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found;  
surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them.  
7 You are my hiding place;  
you will protect me from trouble  
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

*Why has God given us authorities to govern over us?*

*Is there ever a time when we should not submit to the authorities? When? See Acts 4:18-20 and 1 Peter 4:15-16.*

*Verse to Remember:  
Psalm 32:5*

Notes,  
Thoughts,  
Questions

*Jesus called children to Himself, He blessed them, and He used their simple faith as an example to His disciples. (See Mark 10:13-15.)*

*How do we live out a child-like faith?*

The Hymn: Lord Jesus Christ, the Children's Friend *LSB* 866

Lord Jesus Christ, the children's friend,  
To each of them Your presence send;  
Call them by name and keep them true  
In loving faith, dear Lord, to You.

For by Your Word we clearly see  
That we have sinned continually;  
But show us too, forgiving Lord,  
Your saving Gospel's great reward.

That all of us, Your children dear,  
By Christ redeemed, may Christ revere;  
Lead us in joy that all we do  
Will witness to our love for You.

Then guard and keep us to the end,  
Secure in You, our gracious friend,  
That in Your heav'nly family  
We sing Your praise eternally.

Lord  
Jesus  
Christ,  
the  
children's  
friend

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# Faith + Life Connections

*Focus on Matthew 18:1-5.*

Do you like to be first—first in line, first bowl of ice cream, first to try out the new toy? Jesus' disciples liked to be first too. But Jesus told them it's better to be like a small child, who depends on others for everything. God wants us to look to Him for everything, including life in heaven!

*Focus on Romans 13:8-10*

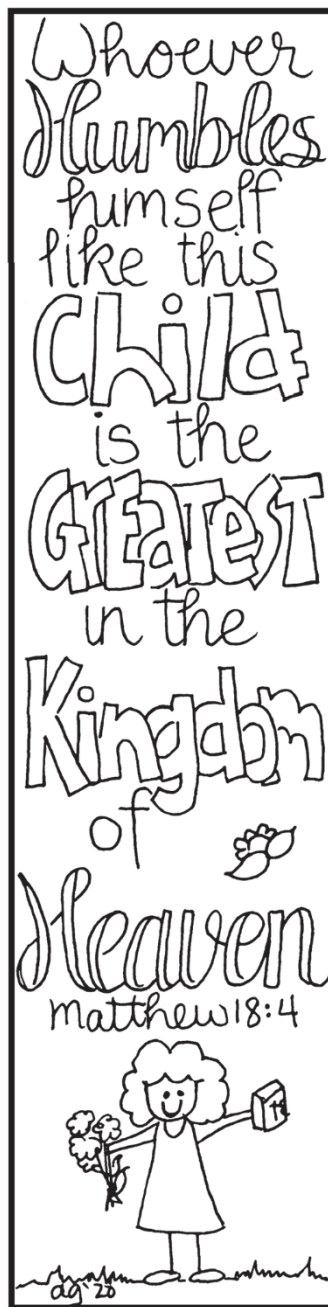
Name a rule in your home, school, or community that you need to follow. Why do we have rules? God gave us 10 special rules to follow, the 10 Commandments. Pick a commandment and read it (see Exodus 20 or Luther's Small Catechism). How does following that commandment help you show love to God and others?

*Focus on Psalm 32:5.*

*Transgression* means "sin." What does God do when we say we're sorry for our sins? Say a prayer of thanks to God for His love and forgiveness.

*Bible Verse to Memorize:*

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."  
And you forgave the guilt of my sin.  
Psalm 32:5



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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

September 11–September 16, 2023

*This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, September 17.*

**Proper 19**

## The Gospel: Matthew 18:21–35

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” 22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. 23 “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ 27 The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28 “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. 29 “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ 30 “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32 “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

## Devotion on the Gospel

Peter had been listening to Jesus talk about relationships. Jesus was outlining what should happen in relationships when sin comes along: Go to him or her and talk about the problem. Let’s have no broken relationships, no bitterness, no spite, no hatred. Forgive one another. Gain the brother. That’s how Christian relationships should work.

And Peter keeps listening—and thinking—and listening some more. Finally Peter asks: Lord, how often do I forgive my brother? Surely there’s got to be an end to this forgiveness. There is a limit, isn’t there? Seven is a good number, right? Let’s put the forgiveness threshold there. I’ll forgive my brother up to seven times.

Jesus says: Oh no, Peter, not seven times. No, I say forgive your brother seventy-seven times! You see, Peter, God’s way is so very different. No counting. No quotas. No forgiveness threshold. Just let the forgiveness flow.

It’s the way God does it, isn’t it? We stand before God as sinful people. The amount we owe in payment for our sin is staggering! And we have nothing to offer. Sinners are bankrupt people.

But listen to our God: My child, you are forgiven! Your sin is forgiven! Christ Jesus came into the world for you. He was born for you. He lived for you. And then He died and rose for you. And He offers you mercy and grace without cost. He offers you forgiveness and salvation freely. And not just seven times—or even seventy-seven times. It’s unlimited forgiveness! There is no forgiveness threshold. Jesus says: That’s the way God does it. And that’s the way you should do it.

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*What does this parable tell us about the importance of forgiving those who sin against us?*

*What limits does God put on the forgiveness of sins—His forgiveness of our sins, and our forgiveness of others’ sins against us?*



## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Why do you think Joseph wept when he heard his brothers' words?*

*How was Joseph able to forgive his brothers for the horrible things they did to him?*

*Christians sometimes have different opinions on matters that are not defined as "right" or "wrong" by Scripture. How should we behave toward one another when this happens? Think of a specific example and discuss.*

*What does Paul say about Christians judging one another?*

### The Old Testament Reading: Genesis 50:15-21

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" 16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. 21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

### The Epistle: Romans 14:1-12

Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. 2 One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. 4 Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

5 One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. 6 Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

10 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written:

"'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'"

12 So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.



## The Psalm: Psalm 103:1-12

- 1 Praise the Lord, my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- 2 Praise the Lord, my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits—
- 3 who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,
- 4 who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- 5 who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- 6 The Lord works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.
- 7 He made known his ways to Moses,  
his deeds to the people of Israel:
- 8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.
- 9 He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.
- 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;
- 12 as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

*The Lord is compassionate and  
gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in  
love.*

Notes,  
Thoughts,  
Questions

*Verse to Remember:*  
Psalm 103:8

Notes,  
Thoughts,  
Questions

*This hymn is a beautiful prayer of confession. As you listen or sing along, lay your sins at Jesus' feet, taking comfort in His love and forgiveness for you.*

The Hymn: Jesus Sinners Doth Receive

LSB 609

Jesus sinners doth receive;  
Oh, may all this saying ponder  
Who in sin's delusions live  
And from God and heaven wander!  
Here is hope for all who grieve:  
Jesus sinners doth receive.

We deserve but grief and shame,  
Yet His words, rich grace revealing,  
Pardon, peace, and life proclaim;  
Here our ills have perfect healing.  
Firmly in these words believe:  
Jesus sinners doth receive.

Sheep that from the fold did stray  
No true shepherd e'er forsaketh;  
Weary souls that lost their way  
Christ, the Shepherd, gently taketh  
In His arms that they may live:  
Jesus sinners doth receive.

I, a sinner, come to Thee  
With a penitent confession.  
Savior, mercy show to me;  
Grant for all my sins remission.  
Let these words my soul relieve:  
Jesus sinners doth receive.

Oh, how blest it is to know:  
Were as scarlet my transgression,  
It shall be as white as snow  
By Thy blood and bitter passion;  
For these words I now believe:  
Jesus sinners doth receive.

Now my conscience is at peace;  
From the Law I stand acquitted.  
Christ hath purchased my release  
And my ev'ry sin remitted.  
Naught remains my soul to grieve:  
Jesus sinners doth receive.

Jesus sinners doth receive;  
Also I have been forgiven;  
And when I this earth must leave,  
I shall find an open heaven.  
Dying, still to Him I cleave:  
Jesus sinners doth receive.

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# Faith + Life Connections

"I'll never forgive you!" Have you ever heard someone say that? Have you ever said that? It's easy to remember when someone wronged us, and it can be hard to forgive them, especially if they keep on doing it to us! Thank goodness God isn't like us! He forgives all our sins, no matter how bad or often we sin against Him. He wants us to forgive others the same way.

*Matthew 18:21-35*

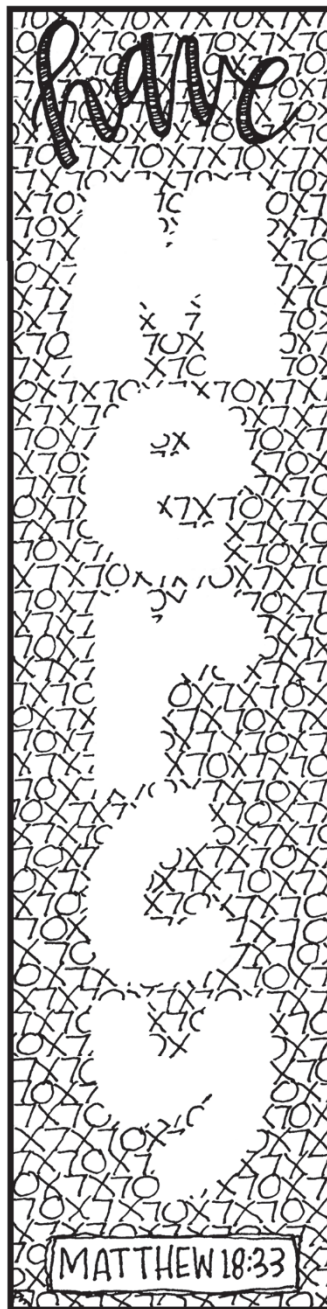
Read the story of Joseph from a children's Bible story book. What is most surprising about this Bible account? How do you see God at work in the life of Joseph?

*Genesis 50:15-21*

Look together at a globe or a map. Find north, south, east, and west. Now go outside and point out the directions. Which way is east? West? How far away is the west from the east? That's how far God has taken your sins away from you!

*Psalms 103:1-12*

**Memorize:**  
The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.  
*Psalms 103:8*



JESUS, forgive me for:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

Help me have a forgiving heart

Coloring pages from [visualfaithmin.org](http://visualfaithmin.org)

**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

September 18–September 23, 2023

*This devotional material is based on Bible readings for Sunday, September 24.*

## Proper 20

### The Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius[a] for the day and sent them into his vineyard. 3 “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4 He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ 5 So they went. “He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 6 About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ 7 “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ 8 “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ 9 “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ 13 “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ 16 “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

### Devotion on the Gospel

We crave fairness. Everything has to be fair. Everything at work. Everything at home. Everything at school. Everything in life! Everything has to be fair. We crave fairness. Maybe that’s why God’s grace is so hard for us to understand sometimes.

Our whole lives we are taught that you get what you pay for. You earn what you have worked for. There’s no such thing as a free lunch. No pain, no gain. If you haven’t earned it, you don’t get it. Because that wouldn’t be fair.

And along comes Jesus with His Gospel and He tells us something completely different. The Gospel says, you don’t get what you deserve. You deserve death. You deserve judgment. You deserve nothing good. And yet, God gives you the greatest good. He gives you everything. And He gives it freely.

Every single one of us is undeserving. Not a single person deserves to be God’s child. But our Lord comes to us and He gives us that gift which is totally undeserved, totally unmerited, totally unearned. He gives us salvation. He gives us eternity. He gives us forgiveness through Jesus’ death on the cross. He gives us His love. And He gives it to all!

And it isn’t fair! If it were fair, no one would be saved. Thank God it’s not fair! His love, forgiveness, and salvation are offered freely to you and to everyone. By grace you have been saved! By His undeserved, unearned, unfair grace.

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*What does this passage say about our efforts to earn eternal life?*

*What does it say about God’s love and mercy for all people?*

*Have you ever thought about why it’s a good thing that God isn’t fair with us?*

*What would we deserve?*

*What do we receive instead?*

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*How does this passage from Isaiah give insight into why we don't always understand God and His ways?*

*How might it help you find peace even when you don't understand?*

*What does Paul mean when he says, "To me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"?*

*What good comes from living on this earth as a believer in Christ?*

*What good comes from dying as a believer in Christ?*

## The Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 55:6-9

6 Seek the Lord while he may be found;  
call on him while he is near.

7 Let the wicked forsake their ways  
and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,"  
declares the Lord.

9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

## The Epistle: Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30

12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

19 for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

## The Psalm: Psalm 27:1-9

1 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[a] 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..

## Notes, Thoughts, Questions

*Verse to Remember:*  
Psalm 27:1

Notes,  
Thoughts,  
Questions

*Look back at the  
Gospel Reading for  
today as you read  
this hymn.*

*What  
encouragement does  
this give to you as  
you continue to  
witness to people  
who seem not to be  
listening?*

The Hymn: Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling *LSB* 827

Hark, the voice of Jesus calling,  
“Who will go and work today?  
Fields are white and harvests waiting—  
Who will bear the sheaves away?”  
Loud and long the Master calleth;  
Rich reward He offers thee.  
Who will answer, gladly saying,  
“Here am I, send me, send me”?

Some take up His task in morning,  
To their Lord responding soon;  
Some are called in heat of midday,  
Others late in afternoon;  
Even as the sun is setting,  
Some are sent into the fields,  
There to gather in the bounty  
That God’s Word so richly yields.

For as rain and snow from heaven  
Water seeds in dusty soil,  
Causing them to bud and flower,  
Giving bread to those who toil;  
So the Lord sends forth His promise,  
Words of life and joy and peace—  
Never void to Him returning,  
Bearing fruit with great increase.

Hearken to the Lord whose coming  
Marks the time when grace shall end,  
When with His angelic reapers  
He in glory shall descend.  
Soon the night, the final harvest;  
Soon the time for work shall cease.  
Then the souls His grace has garnered  
Shall enjoy His Sabbath peace.

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Then the  
souls His  
grace has  
garnered  
Shall  
enjoy His  
Sabbath  
peace



# Faith + Life Connections

Serve dessert tonight, giving one person a larger portion. You might hear, "It's not fair!" When have you heard these words? Give examples. We want people to get what they deserve. Thank goodness God doesn't give us what we deserve! Instead, He gives us forgiveness and life with Him.

*Matthew 20:1-16*

Play Hide and Seek. It's fun to find what you're looking for! God wants you to seek and find Him. How? Read and listen to His Word, go to Him in prayer. God promises to be found and to hear you.

*Isaiah 55:6-9*

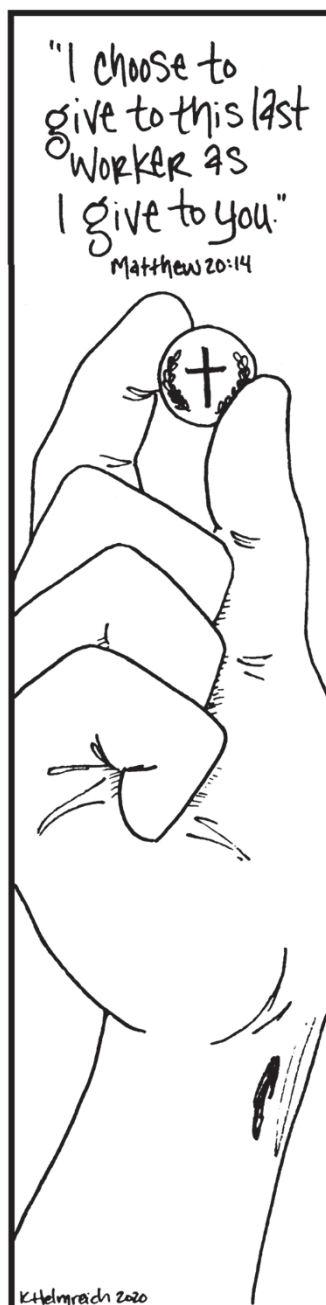
What things make you afraid? Enemies sometimes made King David afraid. But he knew where to go—to God and His house! What did David do there? See verses 6-7. When you're afraid, go to God—He will help you!

*Psalms 27:1-9*

Memorize:

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?

*Psalms 27:1*



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