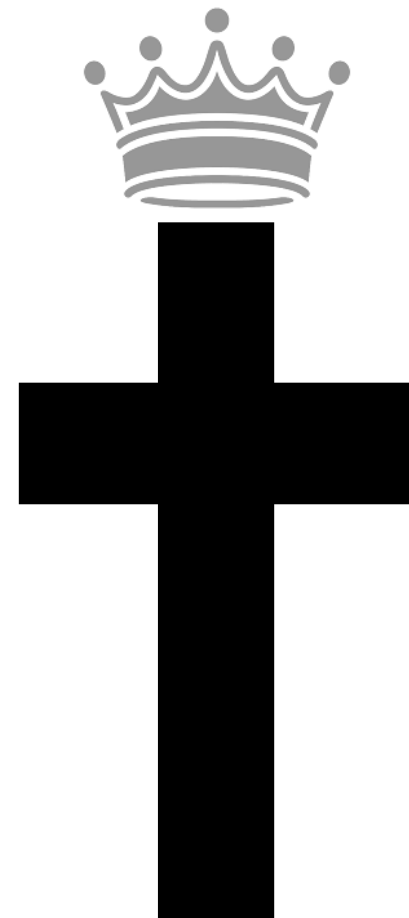


His Cross, My Crown

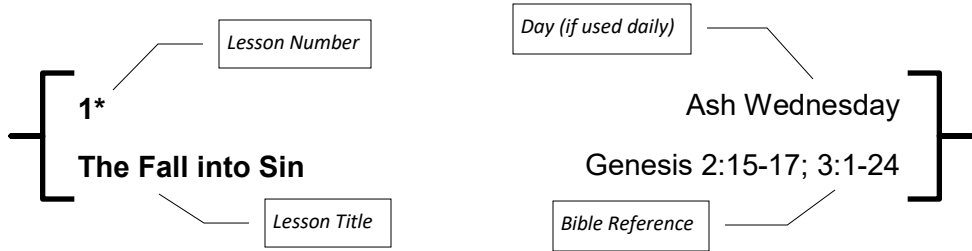
Lenten devotions on the life of Christ
for small children



[Notes]

We pray that this series of devotions helps your family or classroom learn about Jesus and his work of salvation for us. These devotions were written for Pre-K through early elementary. References to the Bible are included; we encourage you to read them whenever possible and accessible for the children who are listening.

How To Use



Bible references are taken from the NIV 2011. Quoted text is in italics.

Hymn suggestions are provided based on the next Sunday's Hymn of the Day. There is a hymn chart at the end of this booklet with hymn numbers for common Lutheran hymnals other than Christian Worship (1993). All hymns chosen are public domain. Feel free to use other hymns if your prefer.

Sunday devotions focus specifically on Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

Remember that toddlers and preschoolers have very short attention spans. Small children absorb a surprising amount of information while they're doing other things, so set them up to succeed and adjust expectations if they are having trouble sitting still and only listening.

Classroom Variations

Without days off, most classrooms will have school 32 days between Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. There are 47 devotions. Our suggested devotions for a shorter period are marked with an * by the lesson number.

Authors

The writers of this series belong to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Devotions were written by Leah Haasch, Nick Haasch, and Kristi Horn. The series was edited for doctrinal content by Pastor Nick Haasch. Please read all religious texts with discernment and preview content before sharing with your children/class whether or not you belong to the WELS.

[Hymn Chart]

Hymn Title	Christian Worship	The Lutheran Hymnal	Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary	Lutheran Service Book
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	200	262	250	656
God Loved the World So That He Gave	391	245	403	571
Lord, You I Love With All My Heart	434	429	406	708
Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us	486	442	459	851 (verse 4 is verse 5 in others)
My Song is Love Unknown	110	Does not have	303	430
Ride On, Ride On in Majesty	133	162	280	441
Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior	313	311 (v. 5, 4 = CW 6-7)	316 (v. 5, 4 = CW 6-7)	627 (v. 5, 4 = CW 6-7)
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	125	175	308	425
I Know That My Redeemer Lives	152	200	351	461

[Alleluia! Jesus Lives!]

THIS IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY!

Our series of devotions ends here but there's more to learn!

Read the rest of the New Testament to hear about how Jesus appeared many times to his disciples after he rose, ascended into heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to strengthen believers. We still have the Holy Spirit creating and sustaining faith today! You can also read about the beginning of the Christian church and the missionary journeys of the Apostles.

We pray that these devotions have helped connect the dots between Old Testament prophecies and promises and the events of the New Testament.

God be with you!

[1* Ash Wednesday The Fall into Sin Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-24]

Why is there trouble in the world? Why do we get sick and hurt, and why do we sometimes hurt others? God made the world to be wonderful. People were never supposed to get hurt or sick or die. We were made to love each other and God all the time. But we weren't that way for very long.

Adam and Eve were the first people created by God. He put them in a garden that had everything they needed to live and be happy. God gave them one rule: Do not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. They could eat from any other tree or plant, just not that one.

The devil, who hates God and wants everyone else to hate God too, made himself into a snake. He told Adam and Eve that God didn't want them to eat from that tree because God was keeping secrets from them, and that if they ate from it they would know what God knows. Adam and Eve listened to the snake instead of trusting in God and they ate from the tree. This was the first time a person had done what God says not to do. We call this sin. From that time the world has not been perfect. People get sick, hurt, and we die. Work is hard. Sometimes we hurt other people. All because we can't do what God says is right.

But God had a plan to bring us back to him and to heaven, where we can live without sin again. God promised Adam and Eve that he would one day send a savior to take our sins away. That savior would be hurt by the devil but would finally crush him for us. That savior is Jesus.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for being the savior God promised to take our sins away. Please forgive us for the times we decide what we want is more important than what God tells us to do. Thank you for loving us anyway. In Your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (CW 200) v 1*

1. A mighty fortress is our God,
A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need
That has us now o'ertaken.
The old evil foe
Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal.

2*

Christmas

Thursday

Luke 2:1-20

Do you remember what you got for Christmas a few months ago?

The Bible tells us the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2. Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to be counted for the emperor. Mary was about to give birth to Jesus, but when they got to Bethlehem there wasn't room for them in the hotel! There was no hospital; where would Mary have her baby? Joseph found a barn and Jesus was born there. Mary wrapped him in blankets and put him in the feed box since they didn't have a crib.

Meanwhile, shepherds were watching their sheep nearby. An angel appeared in the sky and told the shepherds that the Son of God, their savior, had been born in Bethlehem. Many more angels appeared and filled the sky with the good news while the shepherds ran to worship the baby.

We might not remember everything we got for Christmas, but we usually can remember the really exciting presents. Our best present ever was baby Jesus, born to save us from our sins. For the next few weeks we will learn about his life and see God's plan to bring us to heaven.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for coming into our world as a baby at Christmas. You are our best present because you love us and bring us to heaven. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (CW 200) v 2*

2. With might of ours can naught be done;
 Soon were our loss effected.
 But for us fights the valiant one
 Whom God himself elected.
 You ask, "Who is this?"
 Jesus Christ it is,
 The almighty Lord.
 And there's no other God;
 He holds the field forever.

47

Road to Emmaus

Easter Sunday

Luke 24:13-35

Have you ever heard news that felt so good, it took a while to believe it?

On Easter Sunday, two followers of Jesus were walking along the road on their way to a town called Emmaus. Jesus began walking with them but they didn't know it was Jesus. He asked, "What are you talking about?" They replied, "You must not be from around here." They told Jesus all about what had happened to Jesus, how he had been killed and buried. The men were sad because they had hoped that Jesus was truly the Savior. They told Jesus how the women had gone to the tomb that morning and seen angels who told them that Jesus was alive, and how other disciples had gone too and saw that Jesus' body was gone. The men were confused and sad.

Jesus, still hiding who he was, said, "I am surprised you don't understand and believe these things! Let me explain it all to you." Jesus started with the prophets from long ago and showed the men how everything that had happened to Jesus happened according to God's plan. What an amazing thing to hear!

When they reached the town, the men invited Jesus in for supper. As they sat down, Jesus gave thanks and broke the bread. Then the men realized who he was. Before they could do more than blink at each other, he disappeared. The men ran all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples about seeing and talking to their risen Lord.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, what an amazing story your friends had to share! Please fill my soul with the joy they must have had as they ran back to tell their story. Help me share your story too, so all the people I meet can know the amazing gifts you have given us. In your holy name I pray, Amen.*

Sing: *I Know that My Redeemer Lives (CW 152) v 7-8*

7. He lives and grants me daily breath;
 He lives, and I shall conquer death.
 He lives my mansion to prepare;
 He lives to bring me safely there.
8. He lives, all glory to his name!
 He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
 Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:
 "I know that my Redeemer lives!"

46*

The Resurrection

Holy Saturday

Matthew 28:1-10

As early as they could come after the special Jewish holiday, the women who saw Jesus crucified made their way to his tomb. They were going to finish preparing Jesus' body with sweet smelling spices. This was their way of saying goodbye to a dear friend and showing respect to him.

As they were walking, there was a big problem they couldn't solve. A large stone had been placed over the entrance to the tomb and there were some guards.

They didn't need to fuss. When they arrived the guards were gone. The stone had been rolled away and two angels were there to greet the women instead. They told the ladies some good news that changed their morning, their day, their eternal lives.

They came to say goodbye one last time to their friend. But the angels told them they didn't need to say good bye. Jesus wasn't there. He had risen from the dead, just as he said. He was alive again.

Soon they saw Jesus on the road. Instead of saying goodbye, they were able to say hello. He greeted them and chatted with them. He then asked them to go and tell his friends, the disciples that he really was alive.

Pray: We are so happy, Jesus, that you are alive. You promised that because you live forever, so will we. We will be with you forever. Thank you! In your name we pray, amen.

Sing: *I Know that My Redeemer Lives (CW 152) v 5-6*

5. He lives to silence all my fears;
He lives to wipe away my tears.
He lives to calm my troubled heart;
He lives all blessings to impart.
6. He lives, my kind, wise, heav'nly friend;
He lives and loves me to the end.
He lives, and while he lives I'll sing;
He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.

3*

Baptism of Jesus

Friday

Matthew 3:13-17

When Jesus grew up he got ready to start his important work of telling the world about God's love and plan to save us. First he needed to be baptized. Baptism is when God washes away our sins and puts faith in our hearts, making us part of his family and giving us heaven when we die. When Jesus was on earth, people were baptized by being dunked in a river. Most baptisms now are in a church with a pastor pouring a little bit of water on a person's forehead. The important things are using water and the words Jesus taught us: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Jesus didn't have any sins to wash away, and the man who was doing all the baptizing when Jesus came to see him, John, was confused. John said, "*I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?*" Jesus replied, "*Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.*" Jesus knew that to take our place with our sins he had to be baptized. God the Father showed this was true in a very special way: "*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 lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'*"

Pray: *Dear Father, thank you for being well pleased with Jesus taking our place to carry our sins away. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for creating faith in our hearts. Thank you, Jesus, for doing all the things you had to do to make us holy. In your precious name, Amen.*

Sing: *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (CW 200) v 3*

3. Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none.
He's judged; the deed is done!
One little word can fell him.

4*

Saturday

The Temptation of Jesus

Matthew 4:1-11

When is it hard to follow the rules?

Jesus spent forty days (more than a month!) by himself in the desert with no food. Then the devil came to him to try to get him to sin. The devil knew that if Jesus did anything wrong, even once, then Jesus wouldn't be perfect anymore and he wouldn't be able to take our sins away.

The devil tried three tricks. First he said, *"If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."* Jesus knew he could do it, and he was certainly hungry, but he also knew God didn't want him to do it and God's work is more important than food. Jesus said no. Next the devil got sneaky. He took Jesus to the top of the church and told Jesus to throw himself down because God promises to protect us. Jesus answered that God also tells us not to test his protection by doing dangerous things on purpose. The devil knew God's word too and tried to use it to get Jesus to sin! But Jesus knew the devil wasn't telling the whole truth. Finally, the devil took Jesus to the top of a mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. *"All this I will give to you if you will bow down and worship me,"* the devil said. Jesus replied, *"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"*

Jesus won! The devil showed Jesus an easy way to enjoy life on earth but Jesus knew that Satan's way meant we would still be lost in our sins. Jesus won the final battle for us too when he died on the cross.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for knowing God's will so well. We are sorry for the times we don't say no to sin as you did. Help us to know and follow God's rules. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (CW 200) v 4*

4. The Word they still shall let remain,
Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With his good gifts and Spirit.
And do what they will -
Hate, steal, hurt, or kill -
Though all may be gone,
Our victory is won;
The kingdom's ours forever!

45*

Good Friday

Jesus's Death and Burial

Luke 23:44-49, Matt 27:57-66

No one likes to talk about dying. But it is now part of this life because we all sin. There's only one person who died who never sinned - Jesus.

We heard how he was keeping all of God's promises made about him by going to the cross. All the work to truly pay for the sins for every single person, including us, was completed. Jesus said, "It is finished."

After this, Jesus said, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit." He was done. He had paid for sins. And so he breathed one final breath and died.

Two men, one named Joseph and the other named Nicodemus, were believers in Jesus. They asked Pilate if they could take his body down from the cross so that they could bury their friend. Because the next day was a special Jewish holiday they were in a hurry. They wrapped him in linen cloth. Nearby was a small cave which was carved out to be a tomb. They placed Jesus' body there. Some women who also believed in Jesus promised to come back on Sunday to finish preparing Jesus' body for burial.

A large stone was rolled over the entrance of the tomb. Guards were posted and some wax was dribbled over the stone because some of the Jewish leaders were worried that Jesus' friends might try to take his body and pretend he was alive again. No one thought that Jesus was going to come back on his own. Not the Jewish leaders. Not the disciples. Not even the women. It seemed like Jesus wasn't coming back.

Pray: Father in Heaven, you sent your only Son to take our place. It was a very sad day when Jesus died. Remind us that Jesus died to finish paying for our sins. Our sins really have been paid for! Because of Jesus, we have peace with you. Amen.

Sing: *I Know that My Redeemer Lives (CW 152) v 3-4*

3. He lives to bless me with his love;
He lives to plead for me above.
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;
He lives to help in time of need.
4. He lives to grant me rich supply;
He lives to guide me with his eye.
He lives to comfort me when faint;
He lives to hear my soul's complaint.

44*

Maundy Thursday

The Crucifixion

John 19:17-18, 23-24, 28-29, Mt 27:39-46

Picture a church. What's often on top of the steeple? Think of inside the church. What's usually up front, on or above the altar? Imagine your pastor in his robes. What is dangling from his necklace? A cross!

We're very used to seeing crosses all over church. In fact, it might not seem like such a big deal. Jesus died on the cross to take away our sins. But a cross was a scary thing back in Jesus' day. It was a tool used to get rid of the worst of criminals. It was painful. It was shameful. It was terrible. And anyone who was put up on a cross did not come back down alive.

After being put on trial before the Jewish leaders, and then Pilate, Jesus was going to be punished by being put to death on a cross. He was forced to carry his own cross to a place called Golgotha. When he couldn't, a man named Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry Jesus' cross for him. When they arrived at the top of Golgotha, the Roman soldiers took a hammer and nails and nailed Jesus to the cross. Two other criminals were also put on crosses that day. One on Jesus' left and the other on his right. Many people teased him. As Jesus was upon on the cross, he still made sure to fulfill what the Bible had promised about him. The soldiers gambled for his clothes. None of his bones were broken. He thirsted and asked for water. But the most important promise from the old Testament was fulfilled when Jesus cried out, "My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?!"

There on the cross Jesus was feeling God the Father's love being removed from him. There on the cross Jesus was suffering. There on the cross Jesus was going to die. This is what we deserve for our sins. But Jesus was being punished in our place.

Pray: *Dearest Jesus, you were punished for our sins. You did this to save us. Help us to say we are sorry when we sin. Help us also to trust that you really have forgiven us. In your name we pray. Amen.*

Sing: *I Know that My Redeemer Lives (CW 152) v 1-2*

1. I know that my Redeemer lives;
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my ever-living Head!
2. He lives triumphant from the grave;
He lives eternally to save.
He lives all-glorious in the sky;
He lives exalted there on high.

5*

Sunday

Jesus: From Bethlehem

Micah 5:2, Matthew 1:5-6

What is a prophecy? Sometimes God gives his people a peek at his plans. He always tells us what we need to know, but the Bible also has extra information that helps us see that God keeps his promises. These are prophecies: special news about who or what something will be long before it happens. The people who speak prophecies are called prophets.

The prophet Micah wrote, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times... He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace."

Our world is not always peaceful. It is not what God created it to be: perfect, holy, a celebration of his goodness all the time. Sin has made this world a scary place sometimes. But God promised from the time of the first sin to send a Savior. The Savior would not make the world perfect again, but he would make us holy in God's sight so we can go to heaven. Heaven will always be everything God wants for us and more. Jesus is the Savior God promised. Micah's words point to Jesus, who was born in the tiny town of Bethlehem. He still shepherds his flock, and we have his peace even now in our imperfect world.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, Sometimes I have a hard time feeling your peace. Life has hard, scary things. Thank you for making it clear in the Bible that you are the Savior that God promised to send. Even when I don't feel peaceful, I have your peace. In your name I pray, Amen.*

Sing: *God Loved the World So That He Gave (CW 391) v 1*

1. God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.

6

Water into Wine

Monday

John 2:1-11

What happens at your house when you run out of milk or juice?

Jesus went to a wedding. Wedding parties for Jesus' people, the Jews, often lasted several days. Suddenly, there was no more wine! Most people drank wine or water, and running out was a big problem. Jesus told the workers at the wedding to fill six big jars that were there with water. These jars each held about as much water as you use to take a bath! After they were full Jesus told the workers, *"Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." When they did, they found that the water had turned into wine! And not just any wine, but the best wine.*

Jesus had done his first miracle. A miracle is something that doesn't make sense. It can't be explained by science or logic. Only God could make it happen. And he had. John tells us why in John 2:11 *...He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. The people at the wedding would have been just fine with water to drink. Jesus didn't have to do a miracle. But he did to show the people (and us) that he is God.*

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for all of the wonderful signs you gave while on earth to show us that you are God. Please strengthen our faith in you. In your amazing name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *God Loved the World So That He Gave (CW 391) v 1-2*

1. God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.
2. Christ is the solid rock of faith,
Who was made flesh and suffered death.
All who confide in him alone
Are built on this chief cornerstone.

43*

Before Pilate

Wednesday

Matthew 27:19, John 19:1-16

Do you want to be the decider? When I was little, I wanted to be in charge. I thought it was easy to know what the right thing was and I got frustrated when adults didn't. Now I am in charge and it's not so easy. In our lesson today, a powerful man, Pilate, has to decide what to do with Jesus. It's easy for us to see what the right thing to do is, but it's hard for Pilate to do it.

The Jewish leaders had arrested Jesus and were accusing him of many different things. They wanted to kill Jesus, but they couldn't do that without Pilate letting them. Most of the crimes they told Pilate Jesus had done were made up. But among the lies, they also said Jesus claims to be the Son of God. In Jewish law, claiming to be God is blasphemy and the punishment is death. It's true that Jesus said that, and it's true that he is the Son of God, though the Jews didn't believe it. Pilate didn't really care about the Jew's religious laws. He thought maybe if he had his soldiers hurt Jesus, the people would decide he didn't have to be killed. So Jesus was beaten and mocked. While the Jews were making up bad things about Jesus, Jesus never said, "That's not true!" or tried to explain. He was silent.

Pilate asked Jesus about what the Jews were saying. Pilate asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Yes, I am, but my kingdom is not of this world." Pilate also asked him if he was the Son of God. Jesus told him that he is. This made Pilate afraid. Pilate's wife had sent him a note saying that she had a terrible dream about Jesus, and Pilate shouldn't do anything bad to him. But Pilate was also afraid of the people. There were powerful Jews accusing Jesus, people Pilate needed to get along with. Finally, Pilate took Jesus back out before the people. Pilate washed his hands in front of them and said, "I am washing myself of Jesus's blood. You can choose what to do with him." The people said, "His blood will be on us and on our children." Then Pilate let the Jews take Jesus to crucify him.

Pray: *Dearest Jesus, we are sorry for what you suffered for us. Thank you for dying to forgive not only our sins, but also the sins of the people who lied about you to Pilate. Your blood is on us, but not in judgment; it washes our sins away. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.*

Sing: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (CW 125) v 3-4*

3. See, from his head, his hands, his feet, / Sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet / Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine, / That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, / Demands my soul, my life, my all.

42*

Peter Denies Jesus

Tuesday

Mark 14:66-72

When Jesus was arrested, his disciples all ran away. They were afraid they might be in trouble too. When they had all been together for the Lord's Supper, Jesus had told Peter that before the rooster crowed twice the next morning Peter would say he didn't even know Jesus three times. Peter had been very upset when Jesus said this. Peter said he would rather die with Jesus than pretend he didn't know him.

Maybe it was because of this that Peter followed the angry crowd that had Jesus. Peter came to an area outside of where Jesus was and waited with some servants for Jesus to come out. While he was waiting with them, a servant girl recognized Peter as someone who had been with Jesus. Peter said, "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," and he moved away from her. But she saw him again and told the other people, "This man was with Jesus." Again, Peter said he wasn't one of Jesus' friends. A little while later, someone else said, "You must be one of Jesus' friends; you talk like them." Peter got angry. He said words he shouldn't have and said, "I don't know the man you're talking about!" Just then, the rooster crowed twice and Peter remembered what Jesus had said. He was so upset with himself that he went outside and cried.

There will come times in your life when it would be easier to pretend you don't know Jesus. It can be scary to stand up for what you know to be true when those around you don't believe it and might make fun of you. Remember that Jesus died for Peter's sins and ours too. We pray that we don't pretend we've never heard of Jesus, but if we do, we know Jesus will always say he knows us.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, watching your friends run away and pretend they didn't know you must have been very hard. Thank you for forgiving them and thank you for forgiving us when we don't stay with you too. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (CW 125) v 1-2*

1. When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my God.
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

7*

Fishers of Men

Tuesday

Luke 5:2-11

What are some activities you do at the lake? Maybe you like to swim or go on a boat ride. In today's account, listen to what Jesus does at the lake.

A long time ago, Jesus was preaching on the shore of a lake. He saw Simon's boat and asked to go in it so he could preach from the water. Simon took him out onto the lake. When he was done preaching, Jesus told Simon, "*Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.*" But Simon protested, "*We've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.*" When they put down their nets, they caught so many fish that their nets began to break! When Simon saw the number of fish they caught he was amazed. Then Jesus said, "*Come, follow me. And I will make you fishers of men!*" So Simon and his brother Andrew, and their friends James and John left their boats and followed Jesus.

Jesus called these men to leave their job as fishermen and instead to share the good news about Jesus so that all people may know about him. Jesus calls us to do the same thing-share the news that Jesus died on the cross and rose again to take away the sins of the world.

Pray: *Dear God, thank you for people who tell me about you. Help me to share the good news about Jesus with all people. Amen.*

Sing: *God Loved the World So That He Gave (CW 391) v 1, 3*

1. God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.
3. God would not have the sinner die -
His Son with saving grace is nigh.
His Spirit in the Word does teach
How we the blessed goal may reach.

8

The Beattitudes

Wednesday

Luke 6:20-23

Do you like it when you have to ask for help? Do you like to be hungry or sad or left out? I sure don't!

Jesus says, *"Blessed are you who are poor [in spirit*], for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger [for righteousness*] now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets."*

In today's devotion, Jesus says we're blessed when we don't have what the world says is good. It is nice to be able to do things ourselves, feel satisfied, be happy, and have people who like us, but having a God who loves us is more important. God wants us to realize that we need Jesus. He wants us to feel hungry for his word when we haven't heard it in a while, just as we would be hungry for food if we hadn't eaten. He wants us to look forward to our life to come in heaven, where we will be forever with Jesus.

*Matthew's account includes these clarifications.

Pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for blessing me in my life here on earth and promising greater blessings when I see you in heaven. Help me to rejoice in your will, even when I don't get what I want on earth. In your name I pray, Amen.*

Sing: *God Loved the World So That He Gave (CW 391) v 1, 4*

1. God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.
4. Be of good cheer, for God's own Son
Forgives the sins that you have done.
You're justified by Jesus' blood;
Baptized, you are a child of God.

41*

Gethsemane

Monday

Matthew 26:36-56

After the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday, Jesus and his disciples (except for Judas Iscariot, who had left) went to a garden called Gethsemane. Jesus knew he was about to suffer and die to take away the sins of the world. He knew it must happen to bring us to heaven, but it was still going to hurt a lot and he wanted to pray to God and prepare for it. He told his friends, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Then he prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this awful suffering not happen. But do what you know needs to happen, not what I want to happen." When he stopped praying, he saw that the disciples were sleeping. He woke them up and asked them to stay awake, then went and prayed again. Three times total he went to pray and came back to find them asleep.

The last time Jesus returned from praying, he saw Judas Iscariot coming with a large crowd. There were many people with swords and clubs. Judas had told the people, "I will show you which one is Jesus by kissing him." Judas walked up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Teacher!" and kissed him. Jesus said to Judas, "Friend, do what you came for," and then Jesus was arrested.

It is hard to imagine having faith as strong as Jesus's. He knew how horrible and hard the next day would be for him, with a trial where people lied about him and he was beaten, then an awful death with the weight of all our sins on him. But he still cared more about God's will and our salvation than he did about himself. How blessed we are to have such a savior!

Pray: *Dear Jesus, we are sorry that you were betrayed by your friend. We are sorry you had to be arrested and go through terrible things for our sins. Thank you for being our savior. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior (CW 313) v 6-7*

6. Then hold fast with faith unshaken
That this food is to be taken
By the souls who are distressed,
By hearts that long for peace and rest.
7. Praise the Father, who from heaven
Unto us such food has given
And, to mend what we have done,
Gave into death his only Son.

40*

Palm Sunday

Jesus: Stricken Shepherd

Zechariah 13:7, Mat.26:31-35

Here is another, though less well known, prophecy about what would happen to the Savior. The prophet Zechariah wrote hundreds of years before Jesus was born about the Messiah: *“Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”* (For more about the other ways the shepherd was struck, and became like a lamb before its shearers, read through Isaiah 53:5-7 and Matt. 27:12-14).

Jesus was a shepherd for his disciples. He was their teacher. He was their pastor in a way. He was their friend. He had warned them what was going to happen. He warned them he would be betrayed. He even took three of his disciples with him in the Garden of Gethsemane to watch and pray with him. He wanted his friends close knowing so many bad things were going to happen.

And then Judas betrayed him. Judas, one of his friends, came with a group of men to arrest Jesus. And just when having some friends by his side would have been nice, all of the other disciples ran away. As soon as the Shepherd was in trouble, the sheep scattered.

It hurts when someone like a parent, a brother or sister or a friend is supposed to be there for you and they aren't there. Jesus knows that hurt. His friends ran away so Jesus would have to face the cross alone. But he did. Even though it hurt, he faced all of these terrible things for you and for me, to forgive us so that one day we can be in heaven.

Pray: *Dearest Jesus, we are sorry for the times we run away from you and your word like the disciples did in the garden of Gethsemane. You have won and have promised us heaven so long as we stick with you. Encourage us to stay with you even when life gets scary or hard. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior (CW 313) v 1-2*

1. Jesus Christ, our blessed Savior,
Turned away God's wrath forever;
By his bitter grief and woe
He saved us from the evil foe.
2. As his pledge of love undying,
He, this precious food supplying,
Gives his body with the bread
And with the wine the blood he shed.

9*

Thursday

Build on the Rock

Matthew 7:24-29

Which is a better place to build with blocks: the squishy couch or the hard floor? If you build on the couch and someone sits down near your building, what happens?

Jesus told a story about two men who built houses. The first man built his house on a huge rock. When it stormed and the streams flooded, his house stayed strong because it was built on a solid place. The other man built his house on sand. When the storm came and the floods rose, his house was washed away because it did not have a strong place to stand.

Jesus is our strong rock. He wants our faith to be built on him because he will not be pushed around when troubles come in our lives. If we trust in our own intelligence or money or talents to save us when we have problems, we will quickly see that they are not strong enough. Jesus is strong enough and he loves us enough to give us heaven.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for being my rock. Help me to trust that you will always be firm and hold me tight when my life changes around me. In your strong name I pray, Amen.*

Sing: *God Loved the World So That He Gave (CW 391) v 1, 5*

1. God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.
5. When you are sick, when death draws near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves my soul from death -
This is the anchor of my faith!

10

Healing the Centurion's Servant

Friday

Matthew 8:5-13

What is something you think is amazing? Maybe it's a new toy or something your dad can do. Listen in today's account for what Jesus found amazing.

A long time ago Jesus was traveling when he was told that a Centurion's servant was very sick. Jesus said, "*Shall I come and heal him?*" *But the centurion replied, "Just say the word, and my servant will be healed." Jesus was amazed at the faith of the centurion for he believed that Jesus' words alone could heal. Jesus replied, "Your servant will be healed." When he returned home, he found his servant healed just as Jesus had said!*

The faith of the Centurion that amazed Jesus in our story is a gift from the Holy Spirit. How amazing it is that the Holy Spirit gives us the gift of faith too. Through faith we believe in Jesus as our Savior from sin. Now let's share the good news about Jesus with others.

**a Centurion was a Roman military leader, in charge of 100 men*

Pray: *Dear God, Thank you for the amazing faith you have given me. Help me share my faith with others so that they may know about you. Amen.*

Sing: *God Loved the World So That He Gave (CW 391) v 1, 6*

1. God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.
6. Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To you, O blessed Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!

39*

The Lord's Supper

Saturday

Matthew 26:20-30

On Thursday of Jesus' last week before he died, Holy Week, he had a special supper with his disciples. The Passover is a festival for Jewish people when they remember how God led Moses and the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Jesus and his friends prepared to have the Passover meal.

While they were sitting around the table, Jesus told his disciples that one of them would betray him to the rulers. Judas and Jesus both knew it was him, but Judas pretended that he was still Jesus' friend. Jesus warned Judas that it would not go well for him.

After they had eaten, Jesus gave thanks for the bread they were eating. Then he broke it into pieces and gave some to each disciple. He said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he blessed the wine and passed the cup to each of them. He said, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

Do those words sound familiar? This was the first Lord's Supper, or Communion! Here Jesus assures us of his love and forgiveness by giving us his body and his blood. Like the lambs that were sacrificed, the blood on the doorframes protecting the people inside from death, Jesus' body and blood saves us from our sins.

Pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for your sacrifice for us. It is amazing that you give your body and blood to save us. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Ride On, Ride On in Majesty (CW 133) v 1, 4-5*

1. Ride on, ride on in majesty! / Hark! All the tribes hosanna cry.
O Savior meek, pursue your road, / With palms and scattered
garments strowed.
4. Ride on, ride on in majesty! / Your last and fiercest strife is nigh.
The Father on his sapphire throne / Awaits his own anointed Son.
5. Ride on, ride on in majesty! / In lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow your meek head to mortal pain, / Then take, O Christ, your
power and reign.

38*

Clearing the Temple

Friday

Mark 11:15-19

Why do we go to church? It's not to see our friends or enjoy delicious snacks (though those things are good!). We go to church to hear about God and worship him. When the time we set aside for hearing God's word and worshipping him becomes about something - anything - else, this is sin and it makes God angry.

There was a huge temple, or Jewish church, in Jerusalem. A part of the temple area was for people who weren't Jewish to worship God, because only Jews could go in the main part of the temple. In this area, many people sold animals for sacrifices and changed money for people from other countries. The animal sellers and money changers weren't being fair; they took too much money from people.

Jesus walked into the temple and instead of peace and worship, he found a zoo. Many, many animals with their noises and smells, people being cheated out of their money, peddlers wandering through with their things to sell; instead of God's house, it was a marketplace. Jesus was angry. He flipped over tables and benches and wouldn't let people selling things pass through. He said, "God said his house should be a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of robbers."

We don't like to see Jesus angry. We like to think of him as the Jesus who snuggles the lambs. He is that Jesus too, but if we don't talk about how angry Jesus gets about sin, we're not talking about the real Jesus. Of course, the real Jesus also died for all sins, including misbehavior in church.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for protecting your church. You protected God's temple when you lived on earth and you protect your church now too. Please forgive us for the times we have been distracted from worship. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Ride On, Ride On in Majesty (CW 133) v 1, 5*

1. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark! All the tribes hosanna cry.
O Savior meek, pursue your road,
With palms and scattered garments strowed.
5. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow your meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O Christ, your power and reign.

11*

Calming the Storm

Saturday

Matthew 8:23-27

Who do you go to when you are afraid? Listen in today's account for who the disciples go to when they are afraid.

A long time ago, Jesus and his disciples were traveling across a lake when a furious storm started. The wind blew and the waves splashed over the sides of the boat. Meanwhile, Jesus was fast asleep. The terrified disciples went to Jesus and woke him up saying, "Lord, save us! We are going to drown." Jesus replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the wind and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed... "Even the winds and waves obey him!" they said.

The disciples turned to Jesus when they were afraid. God gives us people to turn to when we are afraid. But more importantly, he invites us to pray to him. Next time you are afraid of something, pray to God to help you to remember that he is in control of all things!

Pray: *Dear Jesus, Thank you for always being with me. Help me to pray to you whenever I am afraid. I know you will always hear me. Amen.*

Sing: *God Loved the World So That He Gave (CW 391) v 1*

1. God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.

Jesus: Heals Many

Isaiah 35:5-6a, Matthew 11:2-5

God told the prophet Isaiah about what the promised Savior would do. *“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.”* Isaiah prophesied that the Savior would make those who can't see or hear able to see and hear, and people who couldn't walk or talk able to jump and shout for joy! *Those are amazing things that can't happen normally. The Savior would be able to do miracles.*

Hundreds of years after Isaiah, John the Baptist, who had baptized Jesus, was also a prophet. He was put in jail because the king didn't like what God said about the king's sins. John sent a message to Jesus. He wanted to know if Jesus was truly the promised Messiah. Jesus said, *“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”* Jesus showed that he is the one God promised to send to save us. *This was very comforting to John: he had seen and baptized the son of God, the long-awaited Savior! We have seen him too, through the words of the Bible with prophecies fulfilled and through our eyes of faith from God. And we will see him with our own eyes in heaven some day!*

Pray: *Mighty Jesus, thank you for coming with your power to fix not only our bodies' problems but more importantly our biggest problem: sin. Thank you also for giving us Old Testament prophecies to prove that you are who you say you are and New Testament proof of your power. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord, You I Love with All My Heart (CW 434) v 1*

1. Lord, you I love with all my heart;
I pray you ne'er from me depart;
With tender mercies cheer me.
Earth has no pleasure I would share;
Heaven itself were void and bare
If you, Lord, were not near me.
And should my heart for sorrow break,
My trust in you no one could shake.
You are the treasure I have sought;
Your precious blood my soul has bought.
Lord Jesus Christ,
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,
Forsake me not! I trust your Word.

Judas's Betrayal

Luke 22:3-6

There were powerful people who did not like Jesus. These people had power because the people thought they understood God's word. The powerful people were teachers, priests, and rulers. They did have God's word, but they had added many extra rules to make themselves seem better. They were so worried about how to make themselves better that they missed what God's word really says: we can't be perfect. We need a savior to be perfect for us.

Now that savior had come. Some of the powerful people didn't understand that Jesus was the savior because they no longer understood what God's word says about the savior. Others saw that Jesus was the promised savior, but they were afraid of losing their power because Jesus was not impressed by their extra rules. Either way, the powerful people knew that Jesus was very popular. Many people were following him and loved him. The rulers were afraid that Jesus could use his many followers to get rid of the powerful people. If only they had understood that Jesus was not interested in power on earth!

Palm Sunday really scared the powerful people. They had started working hard to find a way to get rid of Jesus. The devil had a plan too. He came to Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' close friends. Judas went to some of the powerful people and offered to help them get rid of Jesus. The rulers were very happy to have a spy to help them and agreed to pay Judas thirty pieces of silver if he gave Jesus to them. (This was about four months' wages.)

Pray: *Dear Jesus, We are so sorry that your friend betrayed you. That must have hurt you. We're also sorry that we betray you every time we sin. That must hurt you too. Thank you for taking our sins away on the cross. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Ride On, Ride On in Majesty (CW 133) v 1, 5*

1. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark! All the tribes hosanna cry.
O Savior meek, pursue your road,
With palms and scattered garments strowed.
5. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow your meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O Christ, your power and reign.

Long ago, when a person became a priest or a king they were anointed. Anointed means someone put oil on the person's head to mark them as set apart for God's work. Some kings and queens around the world today are still anointed when they become king or queen.

In today's devotion, Jesus was at a friend's house in Bethany. He was sitting at the table when a woman came up and poured a jar of expensive perfume on his head. Jesus' friends were not happy. "Why did she waste that perfume? She could have sold it for a lot of money and given the money to the poor."

Jesus said, "Why are you being mean to her? She has done a beautiful thing. You will always have poor people to help, but I am not going to be here much longer. She has anointed my body for burial after I die. People will remember her generous gift forever." Jesus knew he was going to die soon. Jesus had already been set apart for God's work, but this woman reminded everyone of that and also gave a peek at what would happen soon to Jesus.

Pray: *Anointed Lord, thank you for coming to be set apart for God's work. Help me remember my baptism as a different anointing that also sets me apart to work for you. In your name I pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Ride On, Ride On in Majesty (CW 133) v 3-4*

3. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
The angel armies of the sky
Look down with sad and wond'ring eyes
To see th'approaching sacrifice.
4. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Your last and fiercest strife is nigh.
The Father on his sapphire throne
Awaits his own anointed Son.

One day, Jesus met a man who was all by himself, living in a graveyard far from people. Evil things from the devil were living in the man. The evil things, demons, knew who Jesus was and they knew that he was much stronger than they were. They made the man very upset and he yelled and pleaded with Jesus not to send the demons away. Jesus knew the demons weren't good for the man, so he called the demons out and sent them into a herd of pigs. The man was healed! He could go home! His family and friends were amazed that he was in control of himself again.

The devil is scary. He is very strong and can cause lots of trouble for us. But no matter what hard things we feel or how big and scary our worries are, Jesus is always stronger. He loves us and he knows how to take care of us too. The devil has already lost to Jesus; Jesus will take us to heaven someday and the devil can't do anything about it.

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, you healed a man with bigger problems than mine. Please help me to trust in you when my feelings are too big for me. Help me to remember that you love me and you have taken all my problems to the cross. In your holy name, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord, You I Love with All My Heart (CW 434) v 1*

1. Lord, you I love with all my heart;
I pray you ne'er from me depart;
With tender mercies cheer me.
Earth has no pleasure I would share;
Heaven itself were void and bare
If you, Lord, were not near me.
And should my heart for sorrow break,
My trust in you no one could shake.
You are the treasure I have sought;
Your precious blood my soul has bought.
Lord Jesus Christ,
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,
Forsake me not! I trust your Word.

Which is more important: a healthy body or a healthy soul?

Jesus was teaching a huge crowd of people one day. He was squished into a house that was jammed with people who wanted to hear him speak. Some men wanted to bring their friend who couldn't walk to meet Jesus. They hoped that Jesus would heal him. But they couldn't get through the door because of the crowd. So they took their friend on his mat up to the roof. In this part of the world it doesn't rain a whole lot and houses often had flat roofs that were like a patio. The men made a hole in the roof right over Jesus' head and then they lowered their friend on his mat right down to the floor in front of Jesus. Jesus saw the man and said, *"Son, your sins are forgiven."* Some of the crowd were upset that Jesus said this. They didn't believe Jesus was God, and only God can forgive sins. Jesus is God, of course. He had done the thing that was really important for the man who couldn't walk when he forgave his sins and gave him Heaven. But Jesus said, *"That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all."*

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, you are in charge of my whole being, body and soul. Thank you for caring for my spirit by forgiving my sins so I can go to heaven. Thank you also for caring about my body while I am on earth. (Is there something about your body or soul you want to talk to Jesus about?) In your healing name I pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord, You I Love with All My Heart (CW 434) v 2*

2. Lord God, 'twas your rich bounty gave
My body, soul, and all I have
In this poor life of labor.
Lord, grant that I in ev'ry place
May glorify your lavish grace
And serve and help my neighbor.
Let no false doctrine me beguile;
Let Satan not my soul defile.
Give strength and patience unto me
To bear my crosses willingly.
Lord Jesus Christ,
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,
Forsake me not! I trust your Word.

Have you ever been invited to a party? Were you excited to go?

Jesus told a parable (a story with a special meaning) about a king who invited important people to a great party with lots of food, a banquet. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to tell the important people that it was time to come. But the important people ignored many of the servants and even killed some of them. The king was angry and punished the people who killed and ignored his servants. Then the king sent more servants to the poor people to invite them to the banquet. The poor people, good and bad, came and filled the party. The king even gave them party clothes to wear! But one person didn't want to put on the clothes from the king; the king asked him why he was at a party without party clothes on, then sent him out of the party.

Can you think of a place that God wants to take us, that we don't deserve to go to? Heaven is the party! We are the poor people, good and bad, who were invited to come when the important people (the Jews) decided they didn't want to go. God even gives us party clothes - the perfection that Jesus gives us - to take our sins (dirty clothes) away. How awesome will it be to spend forever in heaven with God!

Pray: Dear God, thank you for inviting us to the amazing party of heaven, and thank you Jesus for giving us your perfect party clothes. In your name we pray, Amen.

Sing: Ride On, Ride On in Majesty (CW 133) v 3-4

3. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
The angel armies of the sky
Look down with sad and wond'ring eyes
To see th'approaching sacrifice.
4. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Your last and fiercest strife is nigh.
The Father on his sapphire throne
Awaits his own anointed Son.

34*

Palm Sunday

Monday

Mark 11:1-10

How do you decorate for a birthday or special event? In Jesus' time, people didn't have streamers or balloons. Listen to how Jesus came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and see what the people used to make it special.

As Jesus came close to Jerusalem, he sent two of his friends to get a donkey colt from a small town. He told them, "If anyone asks what you are doing taking their donkey, tell them the Lord needs it." His friends did what Jesus said. As they were untying the donkey, some people asked what they were doing. The disciples said, "Jesus told us to do this," and the people let them take the donkey.

The disciples put their coats on the donkey to make a saddle, and Jesus sat on them. Some people put their coats on the ground and others brought branches of palm trees to make a path for the donkey. Many people went ahead and came behind, waving palm branches and shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!" (Hosanna means "Lord, save us!")

This was a very special day. Jesus was being treated like a humble king and entering Jerusalem with his own parade! Did you notice what people used to decorate? Can you imagine decorating for a party with coats and palm branches? Making a special path for a person to walk or ride on is a special way of showing honor to them. The best decoration of all, though, was their shouts of "Hosanna!" They recognized, if just for a little while, that he was their Lord and Savior.

Pray: *Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Thank you for coming to save us, Jesus! In your holy name, Amen.*

Sing: *Ride On, Ride On in Majesty (CW 133) v 1-2*

1. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark! All the tribes hosanna cry.
O Savior meek, pursue your road,
With palms and scattered garments strowed.
2. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
O Christ, your triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquered sin.

15*

Jairus's Daughter

Wednesday

Mark 5:22-43

A man named Jairus (Juh-eye-ruhs) worked in the church. He came to Jesus one day and said, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him." Before Jesus got to Jairus's house, men came to tell them that the little girl had died. They told Jairus not to bother Jesus anymore because they didn't think he could help. Jesus said to the sad father, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

When they got to the house, many people were wailing and crying. Jesus said, "Why all this commotion? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him." Jesus sent everyone out of the house except Jairus, his wife, and three of his disciples. Jesus went to the little girl, took her hand, and said, "Little girl, I say to you, get up! Immediately the girl stood up and walked around... They were completely astonished." Jesus showed that he has power over death.

Even though he had gone to Jesus to get help, Jairus' daughter still died. It may have seemed like God had failed Jairus. But Jesus promises him, "Don't be afraid; just believe." Just believe that God could still fix things. And he did. And he still does.

Prayer: *Jesus, thank you for showing that you are stronger than even death. Your care for a little girl shows me that even though I may not be big or strong, you love me so much that you came to die for my sins and take me to heaven. In your name, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord, You I Love with All My Heart (CW 434) v 2*

2. Lord God, 'twas your rich bounty gave
My body, soul, and all I have
In this poor life of labor.
Lord, grant that I in ev'ry place
May glorify your lavish grace
And serve and help my neighbor.
Let no false doctrine me beguile;
Let Satan not my soul defile.
Give strength and patience unto me
To bear my crosses willingly.
Lord Jesus Christ,
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,
Forsake me not! I trust your Word.

The Sower and the Seed

Matthew 13:1-9, 19-23

What do seeds need to grow into healthy plants? Jesus tells us in our story today what our faith needs to grow healthy.

Jesus told this story (called a parable) to teach us about how God's word grows into faith. *"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered [died] because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop - a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear."*

Later, Jesus explained to his friends what the parable meant. The seeds are God's word. When we hear God's word and understand it (by studying it and having others explain it to us), God's word becomes faith in our hearts. This is the seed that falls on good soil. When someone hears God's word but doesn't understand it (because they don't have anyone to explain it to them or they don't try to hear it more), the Word is snatched away by the devil like the birds snatched away the seeds on the path. Sometimes people hear God's word and get very excited about it for a while, but when troubles come into their lives they forget about God's promises. This is the seed that falls on rocky soil and doesn't have roots to keep it going in the hot sun. Sometimes God gives people strong faith, but they have trouble keeping the distractions of this world out of the way. They become so focused on money or friends or fame that they don't have time for their faith and it doesn't grow stronger. These are the seeds that were choked by weeds. Let's pray that God keeps our hearts ready to receive his word.

Pray: *Dear Lord, please make my life like the good soil, always ready to learn more about you so my faith can grow stronger. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord, You I Love with All My Heart (CW 434) v 3*

3. Lord, let at last your angels come; / To Abram's bosom bear me home
That I may die unfearing. / And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep / Until your reappearing.
And then from death awaken me / That my own eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, your glorious face, / My Savior and my Fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ, / My prayer attend, my prayer attend,
And I will praise you without end.

Jesus: Humble King

Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:5

Close your eyes and picture a king riding into a city. What is he riding on? You can open your eyes. When I picture a king, I see a king or a prince from a Disney movie. He has a fine white horse or maybe several horses pulling a beautiful carriage. Or he is a king of today and has a fancy car. He's definitely not riding a little brown donkey.

Listen to how the prophet Zechariah told God's people their king and savior would come to them 500 years before Jesus was born: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Jesus did enter Jerusalem as our king, riding on a donkey colt. We'll hear more about that day, Palm Sunday, tomorrow. God often works in unexpected ways. We don't think "King" when we hear about a baby born in a tiny little town, or a person riding on a donkey, or someone being hurt and killed because of lies that were told about them. But all of these things were exactly how God said our savior would live and die to take our sins away.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for doing everything the prophets said you would do, especially taking our sins away. We can trust that you will keep your promise and take us to heaven because you kept all your other promises. In your name, Amen.*

Sing: *Ride On, Ride On in Majesty (CW 133) v 1-2*

1. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark! All the tribes hosanna cry.
O Savior meek, pursue your road,
With palms and scattered garments strowed.
2. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
O Christ, your triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquered sin.

32*

The Widow's Mite

Saturday

Mark 12:41-44

Do you ever feel like you don't have enough or know enough or aren't big enough to make a difference? Sometimes I feel like that, and I'm a grownup!

In today's Bible lesson, Jesus was standing in the temple. Many rich people were coming in and giving huge, generous offerings. Then a poor widow came in. A widow is a woman whose husband has died. She didn't have someone to take care of her and she didn't have much money - just two tiny coins that weren't even worth a penny. She did an amazing thing. She gave the two coins - all the money she had - as her offering.

Jesus said, "This poor widow has given more than all the others. She put in everything she had to live on." We might not have a lot of money. We might not be the best singers or the smartest people in class. But we use every gift we have been given to serve God as well as we can. It won't make us rich or famous but we trust that God will bless what we give him and use it.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, I don't feel like I have much to give you. Please help me to see the generous blessings you have given to me and help me to use them for your glory. You have given me the greatest gift - heaven. In your name I pray, Amen.*

Sing: *My Song Is Love Unknown (CW 110) v 1, 7*

1. My song is love unknown,
My Savior's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?
7. Here might I stay and sing;
No story so divine,
Never was love, dear King,
Never was grief like thine.
This is my friend,
In whose sweet praise
I all my days
Could gladly spend!

17*

The Good Samaritan

Friday

Luke 10:25-37

"Serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13) How do we help others?

One day, a man came to Jesus. "Teacher, what must I do to have life in heaven?" Jesus answered with a question, "What commands has God written in his Word?" The man said, "Love the Lord your God. Love your neighbor as yourself. But who is my neighbor?" "Let me tell you a story," Jesus said.

Once there was a man walking all alone. Robbers saw him. They took his clothes, beat him, and left him to die. A priest walked by the man. He saw the man was hurt, but he walked by on the other side. He did not help the man. A helper to the priest walked by the man. He saw the man was hurt, but he walked by on the other side. He did not help the man. A Samaritan walked by the man. He saw the man was hurt, so he walked over to the man. He felt sorry for the man, so he helped the man. He cleaned the man's cuts and put on bandages. He put the hurt man on his donkey and took him to an inn. The Samaritan paid for the room. The next day, he gave the inn keeper 2 coins and said, "take care of this man while I am gone." Jesus asked, "which of the three men do you think was a neighbor to the hurt man?" They answered, "The Samaritan. He helped the hurt man." Jesus replied, "Go and do the same for other people."

The Samaritan helped the hurt man. We too can help people in need. It's one way we can show we have Jesus in our heart. Then we can share the good news with others.

Pray: *Dear God, Lead us to help other people in love. Thank you for always helping us and taking our sins away. Amen*

Sing: *Lord, You I Love with All My Heart (CW 434) v 3*

3. Lord, let at last your angels come;
To Abram's bosom bear me home
That I may die unfearing.
And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep
Until your reappearing.
And then from death awaken me
That my own eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, your glorious face,
My Savior and my Fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ,
My prayer attend, my prayer attend,
And I will praise you without end.

18*

Feeding the 5000

Saturday

Mark 6:32-44

Would five hamburger buns and two fish patties be enough to feed your whole family? How about your whole church?

Jesus had been teaching a large group of people all day. His disciples told him to send the people away so they would have time to find supper. Jesus said, *"You give them something to eat."* The disciples said they didn't have enough money. There were 5000 men, not counting women and children! That's a whole lot more than we have in our church (or even our town)!

Jesus asked the disciples to find out how much food they had. The disciples found a boy who had brought along five small loaves of bread and two small fish for his own supper. Jesus asked all the people to sit down in groups of hundreds or fifties, then he blessed the food, gave thanks for it, and told the disciples to start giving it to the people. The food, which should have only been enough for one or two people, miraculously lasted until everyone had enough to eat. When all the many, many people were full, Jesus told his friends to pick up the leftovers so nothing would be wasted. The disciples gathered 12 baskets full of leftovers - way more food than they had started with! Jesus had done another miracle: something that no one but God could make happen.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for doing miracles like the time you fed more than 5000 people with a small amount of food. You showed that you are powerful and that you love people and care for them. Please help us to always trust your power. In Your name we pray, Amen*

Sing: *Lord, You I Love with All My Heart (CW 434) v 1*

1. Lord, you I love with all my heart;
I pray you ne'er from me depart;
With tender mercies cheer me.
Earth has no pleasure I would share;
Heaven itself were void and bare
If you, Lord, were not near me.
And should my heart for sorrow break,
My trust in you no one could shake.
You are the treasure I have sought;
Your precious blood my soul has bought.
Lord Jesus Christ,
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,
Forsake me not! I trust your Word.

31*

Zacchaeus

Friday

Luke 19:1-10

Are you ever too short to see something?

There was a man named Zacchaeus (Zack-EE-yus) who lived at the time of Jesus. He was a tax collector. Most people did not like tax collectors. Tax collectors came to get the money people owed the government. People don't like spending their money on taxes, but tax collectors often cheated and told people they had to pay more than the government needed, then they would keep the extra.

Zacchaeus was also short. He wanted to see Jesus when he heard Jesus was coming to his town, but he couldn't see over the crowds of people. So Zacchaeus climbed a tree. Up in its branches, he watched Jesus come closer, then stop. How do you think Zacchaeus felt when Jesus turned, looked right at his tree, and said, "Zacchaeus, come down! I'm coming to your house." People were annoyed. Why is Jesus going to Zacchaeus's house? Zacchaeus isn't a good person. He cheats and takes money from us. Why doesn't Jesus come to my house?

Zacchaeus wanted to do what was right. Faith in Jesus changed his heart. He said, "I will give half of what I own to the poor! And if I have cheated anyone, I will give them four times what I took!" Jesus replied, "Today salvation has come to this house. I came to seek and to save what was lost." Jesus knew that Zacchaeus was sorry. Jesus came to forgive sins. Zacchaeus, like us, had been lost in his sins. Now he, like us, had faith that Jesus would take him to heaven.

Pray: *Dear Savior, thank you for looking for Zacchaeus and for me. Thank you for coming to me even though I don't deserve you. Please use me to help you find others who don't know you yet. In your name, Amen.*

Sing: *My Song Is Love Unknown (CW 110) v 6*

6. In life no house, no home
My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heav'n was his home
But mine the tomb
Wherein he lay.

30*

The Prodigal Son

Thursday

Luke 15:11-32

Have you ever had to ask someone to forgive you for doing a bad thing? It's really hard.

Jesus told this story to his disciples. A man had two sons. One son asked for the money he would get someday from his father. The father gave it to his son, who left home and spent the money foolishly. Instead of using it to start a business or help people, he wasted it on things that were fun for a moment but not ok with God. When he ran out of money, he was afraid to go home because he didn't want to tell his father what he had done. So he worked by feeding the pigs of a rich man. He was so hungry that even the pigs' food looked good to him. He remembered that his father's servants had plenty of food; maybe his father would let him work as a servant. The son didn't think his father could ever love him or forgive him for how the son had wasted his money but perhaps he could live as a servant and at least be home.

The father saw his son coming and ran to meet him. The father was so happy to see his son again that he hugged him and kissed him. The son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father forgave him. He called for beautiful clothes and presents for his son, and he ordered a huge supper and party to celebrate. The father had thought he would never see his son again and now here he was!

The other son, the one who had stayed and worked hard and never asked for anything special, was not happy. His brother had done all these bad things while he himself had been good, and who gets a party? The one who did the bad things? How is that fair? His father came and said, "My son, everything I have is yours. But I have to celebrate! Your brother was lost but now he is found!"

All of us are the son who left home. We all leave God, take his promises and waste them. By his grace, he takes us back into his family. He doesn't just forgive us; he celebrates us coming home! But sometimes we're also like the son who stayed at home and worked. We get annoyed when people who did bad things are treated with the same love and respect that we are. We feel we've earned more than they have. But God reminds us that we have heaven! We should be glad our brothers are going there too.

Pray: *Dear Father, please forgive me for the times I have wasted your gifts to me. Thank you for welcoming me back home again! Please also forgive me for not sharing your joy in repentance when I get jealous. Help me to rejoice with you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *My Song Is Love Unknown (CW 110) v 5*

5. They rise and needs will have / My dear Lord made away.
A murderer they save; / The Prince of life they slay.
Yet cheerful he / To suffering goes
That he his foes / From death might free.

19

Jesus: Prophet Like Moses Deut. 18:17-18, 21-22, Jn 5:45-47

Sunday

Do you remember Moses? Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and into the land God promised them more than a thousand years before Jesus was born. Moses had been an important leader for God's people. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses told the Israelites what God wanted them to know. The people were worried about knowing God's word without Moses, who would not go with them into the Promised Land. Moses had a comforting message for them.

"The Lord said to me, 'I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.' ...You might ask how you will know if a message comes from God. If a prophet says something in the name of the Lord that does not come true, that message was not from God."

Moses was talking about many prophets who came after him, but he was especially talking about Jesus. Every word about Jesus that had been spoken by the Old Testament prophets came true, and every word Jesus spoke also came true. These were the signs Moses gave of a prophet speaking God's word. Because God kept his word and sent Jesus, and because Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies made about him, we can trust that God will keep his word and take us to heaven.

Pray: *Dear Father in heaven, thank you for telling us about Jesus. Thank you for preparing your people for him so that we would know him. And thank you, Jesus, for fulfilling all that God said about you through his prophets. In Your holy name, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (CW 486) v 1*

1. Lord of glory, you have bought us
With your lifeblood as the price,
Never grudging for the lost ones
That tremendous sacrifice,
And with that have freely given
Blessings countless as the sand
To th'unthankful and the evil
With your own unsparing hand.

20*

Monday

Walking on Water

Matthew 14:22-33

It's easy to believe that God is there for you when life is going well. But what about when life is scary or dangerous? We may wonder if God can watch over us in those moments. Here's a story to remind us of Jesus' power to take care of each one of us, even in the scary moments of life.

Jesus's friends were out on a boat one night. Jesus had stayed behind on land to pray. It was very windy and the boat was rocking. Very, very early in the morning, before the sun had started to rise, the disciples saw Jesus coming toward their boat. He wasn't in his own boat; he was walking on the water! At first the disciples were very afraid. *"It's a ghost!" they cried out in terror.*

But Jesus said, *"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."* *"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."* *"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. Wow...could you imagine walking on top of water? So long as Peter focused on Jesus and his promise to come out and walk to him, Peter was fine. The storm was still there, but Peter would make it through because Jesus was his focus.*

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Like Peter, when life is scary all around us, we forget about Jesus and we doubt. In those moments, like Peter we can cry, "Lord, save me! Take care of me!" And as we see in this story, truly Jesus is the Son of God. He has the power to help. He has the power to save.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, please forgive me for the times I get distracted by the troubles all around me. Remind me that you still are there. You are there to help me and to bring me home to heaven. In your name I pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (CW 486) v 2*

2. Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give you
Gladly, freely, of your own.
With the sunshine of your goodness
Melt our thankless hearts of stone
Till our cold and selfish natures,
Warned by you, at length believe
That more happy and more blessed
'Tis to give than to receive.

29*

Wednesday

Lazarus

John 11:1, 4-7, 11-15, 17-27, 33-44

Jesus was traveling with his disciples when he heard that his friend Lazarus was sick. Before they made their way to where Lazarus was, Jesus found out that he had died. Jesus told the disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." The disciples were confused. Sleeping is good for a sick person! Jesus explained that Lazarus had died but that his death would help the disciples' faith.

Lazarus had two sisters, Mary and Martha. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus said, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day." Jesus replied, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she answered.

Jesus went to the tomb where Lazarus's body had been placed. Jesus cried with the sisters and their friends because he was sad. Jesus told the people to open the tomb. Martha said, "Oh, don't do that! He has been dead for four days and it will smell bad." Jesus told her that we will see the glory of God if we believe. They moved the stone away and Jesus prayed to God the Father, then he said loudly, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus got up and walked out of the tomb. He wasn't a mummy; he was truly alive again!

Pray: *Lord of life and death, thank you for raising Lazarus from the dead to show to us that nothing, not even death, is stronger than you are. You promise to raise us from the dead too someday, and by raising Lazarus you showed that you can do what you promise. In Your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *My Song Is Love Unknown (CW 110) v 4*

4. Why? What has my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run;
He gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
Themselves displease
And 'gainst him rise.

28

Tuesday

Feed My Sheep

John 10:27-30, 21:15-19

What do you know about sheep? Sheep are cute and cuddly but they are not very smart. Sheep need someone to keep them safe and help them find water and food. Jesus calls himself our Good Shepherd because he takes care of us like a shepherd takes care of his sheep.

Jesus says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." Do you know your mom or your dad's voice when they call you, even if you can't see them? Do they know who is calling them if they can't see you? Jesus knows us even better than our parents do!

Jesus says, "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." A regular shepherd can't keep his sheep alive forever but Jesus can give us eternal life, and he has! He took all our sins away on the cross so we can go to heaven to be with him. He has also given us people (parents, pastors, teachers) to take care of our needs like a shepherd does and to tell us about Jesus.

Pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for being my shepherd and promising to bring me to heaven with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sing: *My Song Is Love Unknown (CW 110) v 3*

3. Sometimes they strew his way
And his sweet praises sing,
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify!"
Is all their breath,
And for his death
They thirst and cry.

21

Tuesday

Healing the Canaanite Woman

Mark 7:24-30

It's hard to share. If you had a box of cookies to share and a large group of kids came to have one, would you start handing them out to everyone at once? Would you make sure your good friends and your brothers and sisters got one before you gave them to kids you don't know? Jesus had something like this happen to him.

Jesus was a Jew. The Jewish people did not always get along with other people who lived close to them. God sent his promise of a Savior to the Jews first. In today's story, Jesus had traveled outside Jewish areas into where Gentiles (non-Jews) lived. A woman who was not a Jew came to Jesus and pleaded with him to heal her daughter, who had a bad spirit from the devil inside her. Jesus replied, "*First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.*" *The woman said, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."* *Then he said to her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."*

This is a strange story. Jesus was not calling this woman (and us! We're Gentiles too!) dogs. Jesus was saying that he was sent first to the Jews. The woman understood that. She showed great faith in Jesus when she said she would be happy with crumbs. This meant she knew that even a little bit of the power Jesus had would be enough to heal her daughter. Jesus did heal her daughter, and he heals us too! Jesus shows us here that there is no limit to what he has to give us. He is the Savior of all people, not just the Jews. He doesn't need to save his cookies for his friends because he knows he will never run out.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, Thank you for coming to save all people: Jews, Gentiles, black, white, brown, of all nations and languages. Help us to be generous with the gifts you have given us and especially with the greatest gift: salvation through you. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (CW 486) v 3*

3. Wondrous honor you have given
To our humblest charity
In your own mysterious sentence,
"You have done it unto me."
Can it be, O gracious Master,
That you need what we can do,
Saying by your poor and needy,
"Give as I have giv'n to you"?

22

Prediction of Death

Wednesday

Luke 9:22-27

Have you ever had to say no to something you wanted in order to get something better? Maybe you wanted a small piece of candy but your mom said that if you didn't eat that, you could have a whole bowl of ice cream later. In today's words from Jesus, we hear him tell the disciples (and us) that being given the best thing ever - Heaven - means we won't always have the best things in this life.

First Jesus told his friends that he had to be rejected by the leaders of the people and killed, and then after three days he would be raised back to life. He told them this so they would know what was coming, but somehow they didn't really understand until after it had all happened. Maybe they didn't want to believe such a terrible thing would happen to Jesus.

Then Jesus said, *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"* Jesus knew that his disciples didn't want Jesus to be killed, and they didn't want to go through hard things themselves either. No one wants to be sad or hurt, do they? But Jesus says very clearly that following him, the only way to heaven, is not about enjoying this life. We do have to give up things that make us happy now, like being popular, doing things that feel good but God says are wrong, maybe being rich, and sometimes even our lives. When we give those things up because our faith is more important, we keep our life in heaven.

Pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for giving me life in heaven with you. Please forgive me for the times when I love my life on earth more than I love the life you won for me. Help me to focus on your love and sacrifice when those times come. In your name I pray, Amen.

Sing: *Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (CW 486) v 4*

4. Yes, the sorrow and the sufferings
Which on ev'ry hand we view
Channels are for gifts and off'rings
Due by solemn right to you,
Right of which we may not rob you,
Debt we may not choose but pay
Lest that face of love and pity
Turn from us another day.

27*

Blessing the Children

Monday

Mark 10:13-16

Do you ever feel like adults don't think you're important (or what you think is important) because you're a child? Grownups do have to make decisions and often there is more going on than small children understand. But Jesus tells us that when it comes to faith, children have it figured out better than adults do!

Parents were bringing small children to Jesus to have him bless them. The disciples were getting annoyed. Surely Jesus has more important things to do than hang out with kids! And let's be honest; sometimes groups of little ones get loud and crazy. The disciples told the parents to take the children away and not bother Jesus anymore. But Jesus told the disciples they were wrong! *"Let the little children come to me, and do not get in their way, for the kingdom of God belongs to them."* Jesus tells us that we need to trust him like children do. Children love completely. They believe their grownups when their grownups make promises. Jesus wants us to trust God's promises and love him completely too.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, Thank you for welcoming the little children. You show that children are important to God. Help us all to trust your promises like little children.*

Sing: *My Song Is Love Unknown (CW 110) v 2*

2. He came from his blest throne
Salvation to bestow,
But such disdain! So few
The longed-for Christ would know!
But oh, my friend,
My friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend!

26

Sunday

Jesus: Chosen Servant

Isaiah 42:1-4, Matthew 12:15-21

Today we have another prophecy that shows us that Jesus is the promised Savior. Isaiah was a prophet who spoke God's promises more than 700 years before Jesus was born. Here is one of his prophecies: *"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. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice..."*

Jesus was the servant Isaiah told about. God the Father delights in him and we saw the Spirit on him at his baptism. He brings justice and he does not yell and scream for us to notice him. He is kind and loving; he heals people and cares for them. He is the servant God sent to bring us back to himself.

Pray: *Dear Jesus, thank you for coming to earth not to be served but to be the servant of God for us. Help us to tell others about you as faithfully as Isaiah did. In your name we pray, Amen*

Sing: *My Song Is Love Unknown (CW 110) v 1*

1. My song is love unknown,
My Savior's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?

23*

Thursday

Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-13

What is the most amazing thing you have ever seen?

Jesus' disciples saw some pretty cool stuff following Jesus around. They saw sick people healed, storms calmed, water turned to wine, and so many other miracles. But today's story must have been the coolest thing they saw until Easter.

Jesus took his three closest friends, Peter, James, and John up onto a mountain. Jesus's face and clothes suddenly shone bright like the sun, and two prophets from long, long before also appeared with him: Moses and Elijah. Peter was amazed and offered to build houses up on the mountain for all of them so they could stay in this wonderful glory forever. A cloud surrounded them and they heard a voice from all around saying, *"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"* It was the voice of God the Father! Peter, James, and John fell down to the ground in terror but Jesus came to comfort them. *"Get up. Don't be afraid."* When they got to their feet, they saw no one but Jesus, back to normal.

What an amazing thing, to see the glory of God! Because Jesus came back down the mountain and set aside his glory so he could suffer and die for us, we get to be in the glory of God forever. We don't have to be afraid of God's glory like his friends were. Jesus takes our sins away so we can be happy and comfortable with God in heaven.

Pray: *Transfigured Lord, thank you for showing your disciples your glory. Thank you also for suffering and dying so we can one day live in your glory in heaven. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (CW 486) v 5*

5. Lord of glory, you have bought us
With your lifeblood as the price,
Never grudging for the lost ones
That tremendous sacrifice.
Give us faith to trust you boldly,
Hope, to stay our souls on you;
But, oh, best of all your graces,
With your love our love renew.

24*

Lost Sheep

Friday

Luke 15:4-7

When I do things that are bad, I feel like I should be left out. I think that if my teacher or my parents or my friends know about my sins, they shouldn't love me or want to be around me anymore. My sins hurt Jesus. He had to suffer and die because I am not always nice to my brothers, I don't want to do my homework or help with chores. Today Jesus tells us a story that shows he still wants me to be in his family. In fact, he loves to see me repent (say I'm sorry) and welcome me back.

Some people who thought they were better than everyone else were upset because Jesus was making friends with "sinners." These new friends were sinners - all people except Jesus are! - but these were sinners that everyone knew did bad things. Jesus told the people this story. "Suppose you have a hundred sheep and lose one of them. Don't you leave the ninety-nine and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? And when you find it, aren't you so happy that you carry it home and throw a party to celebrate? In the same way there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine good people who do not need to repent."

Jesus wants all people with all kinds of sins, big and small, to go to heaven with him. He searches and calls for us when we leave his side and get into trouble. And he is so very happy when he finds us and brings us back to himself. No matter what you do, Jesus still loves you and died for you. Some people feel like they don't belong in church; they feel separated from Jesus. We can tell them that Jesus died for them too and can't wait to find them and bring them to heaven!

Pray: *Dear Shepherd, thank you for always going out after your lost and wandering sheep. Please help me to show your love to others so they too can be found by you. In your name I pray, Amen.*

Sing: *Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (CW 486) v 1*

1. Lord of glory, you have bought us
With your lifeblood as the price,
Never grudging for the lost ones
That tremendous sacrifice,
And with that have freely given
Blessings countless as the sand
To th'unthankful and the evil
With your own unsparing hand.

25*

10 Lepers

Saturday

Luke 17:11-19

Feeling left out is hard. No one likes to be told they can't play with the other kids or they're not part of the group. Ten men in today's devotion had to be separated from other people. They had leprosy, which was an awful skin disease. Healthy people could catch leprosy from touching others who had it, so when someone got leprosy they had to go and live all by themselves. (You don't have to worry about getting leprosy; we don't have it where we live and now we have medicines that can cure it if you did catch it.)

Jesus was walking to a town one day when ten men who had this horrible disease saw him coming. They knew they couldn't get near him but they also knew Jesus could heal them. They called out, "Jesus! Help us!" Jesus saw them and said, "Go and show yourselves to the priest." If someone was sick and had to go live away from people, they could go to the priest if they got better and the priest would tell them if they could come home again. As these men went to the priest, they saw that they were healed!

One of the ten men came back to Jesus, praising God and thanking Jesus for healing him. This man was a Samaritan, someone who didn't always get along with Jesus' people, the Jews. Jesus was happy to see the Samaritan's faith! He was also sad that the other nine did not come back to give glory to God.

Our sins separate us from God. We can't be near him because of them. But Jesus heals our souls by taking our sins away! We will be even more happy to join God in heaven than the ten men were to join their families again.

Dear Jesus, Thank you for healing us from our sins so we can come home to you. Please help us to share our faith with others so they can know they are healed too. In your name we pray, Amen.

Sing: Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (CW 486) v 2

2. Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give you
Gladly, freely, of your own.
With the sunshine of your goodness
Melt our thankless hearts of stone
Till our cold and selfish natures,
Warmed by you, at length believe
That more happy and more blessed
'Tis to give than to receive.