

# 66 TEXTS — FROM — BOOKS

*A ONE YEAR PREACHING SCHEDULE*

PAUL DETERDING



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# INTRODUCTION

I've long been a proponent and practitioner of preaching according to the three-year lectionary. For me preaching on one of the appointed lessons for the day and doing so according to a self-imposed schedule of preaching through the lessons provided me with the opportunity to preach on a broad spectrum of the biblical revelation.

I'm old enough to remember a time before any version of the three-year lectionary, when it was customary to read only two lessons at the Divine Service. In the early seventies the three year lectionary first came into our circles, and for me it opened up a whole new world. Three years of appointed lessons multiplied by three readings on each Sunday or other occasion offered nine years of preaching texts. For me it meant a rich fare of the pure milk of the word—for me and for my hearers.

Yet as avid an advocate as I am for preaching the three-year lectionary, I certainly recognize that there are many theologically rich and highly *preachable* texts that do not have a place in that lectionary.<sup>1</sup> What is offered here is both an attempt to address that “defect” and the product of a goal I've had since college days, namely, in the span of a single church year to preach on one text from each of the sixty-six books (as we number them in our English Bibles) of the Holy Scriptures. Hence, the schedule that is offered here.

The Lutheran pastor who lives in the real world may properly respond at this point: “But I don't preach every service in a church year (there are such things as vacations).” I cheerfully acknowledge the validity of that objection. Perhaps those pastors in a team ministry may find this schedule useable, or perhaps those who are sole pastors might have a working relationship with trained elders or with a regular substitute to preach through this schedule in a year.

Those who choose to preach this lectionary might also use the occasion to promote an emphasis in their congregations on Bible reading and/or Bible study. Maybe schedules for reading through much if not all of the Scriptures in a year or two<sup>2</sup> might be distributed in the congregation, or perhaps a Bible survey might be offered in a Bible class setting. Surely getting parishioners interested in reading more of the Scriptures will bring blessings to any congregation.

There were several criteria that guided the selection of texts for this schedule: (1) The most basic one was that there be one text from each of the 66 books of the canon. (2) As much as possible the texts were to be ones that were not otherwise utilized in the three-year lectionary in *Lutheran Service Book*; when texts that were used in *LSB* were selected, these would be texts that would have a lesser place in the lectionary (for example, use on a minor

festival or texts that would likely be preempted by a festival day<sup>3</sup>). (3) The selections were to have theological significance and hence be preachable. In relation to items 2 and 3 it should be noted that some of the texts selected might be thought of as summing up that entire book, so that preaching on that text might in fact be the occasion for a homily on that entire book of the Bible (for example, see the selection from the book of Joshua). (4) The texts should be selected and assigned a place in the schedule so as to be sensitive to the theme of the day and/or season of the church year.

The schedule offers a text for every Sunday in a church year, plus texts for 3 midweek Advent services, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, 6 midweek Lenten services, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Thanksgiving. The last Sunday in October is observed as the festival of the Reformation, and the first Sunday in November is celebrated as All Saints' Day. No text is appointed for an Ascension Day service, except in a church year which begins on December 3 (see the second added note on the schedule below).

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>In the three-year lectionary in *Lutheran Service Book*, 9 of the 66 books of the English canon (1 Chronicles, Ezra, Esther, Song of Solomon, Obadiah, Nahum, Haggai, 2 John, and 3 John) are never used, and another 12 (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, Lamentations, Joel, Jonah, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Philemon, and Jude) are only used once each.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example the schedules in *Lutheran Service Book*, pages 299–304 and *The Lutheran Study Bible*, pages lix–lxiii.

<sup>3</sup>My own experience suggests that many congregations observe the last Sunday in October as Reformation and the first Sunday in November as All Saints' Day. If that is the case, the readings for Proper 26 will be seldom if ever used. Partly on that basis I have selected three of the nine readings appointed for Proper 26 for use in this schedule of texts.

# ONE YEAR PREACHING SCHEDULE

Advent 1.....	Titus 1:1-4
Mid Advent 1.....	Proverbs 8:32-36
Advent 2.....	Daniel 7:1-14 or Daniel 2:31-45
Mid Advent 2.....	Haggai 2:6-9
Advent 3.....	Genesis 49:8-12
Mid Advent 3.....	Amos 9:11-15
Advent 4.....	Numbers 24:15-19
Christmas Eve.....	2 Samuel 7:1-17
Christmas Day.....	1 Peter 1:10-12
Christmas 1.....	1 Timothy 3:14-16 or 1 Chronicles 5:1-2
Christmas 2/Epiphany.....	1 Chronicles 5:1-2 or 1 Timothy 3:14-16
Epiphany 1.....	1 Samuel 16:1-13
Epiphany 2.....	Matthew 8:14-17
Epiphany 3.....	Mark 4:10-12, 21-25
Epiphany 4/Proper 3.....	Isaiah 26:1-21 or 4:2-6 or 19:18-25 or 63:7-14
Epiphany 5/Proper 4.....	1 John 2:12-14
Epiphany 6/Proper 5.....	2 Chronicles 6:3-11
Epiphany 7/Proper 6.....	2 Peter 1:2-15
Epiphany 8/Proper 7.....	2 Timothy 3:10-15
Transfiguration.....	Exodus 40:34-38
Ash Wednesday.....	Nehemiah 9:6-31 or Nehemiah 1:5-11
Lent 1.....	James 1:1-11
Mid Lent 2.....	Judges 2:11-18 (19-23)
Lent 2.....	2 Corinthians 13:2-4
Mid Lent 3.....	Lamentations 5:19-22

Lent 3.....	Romans 16:17-20
Mid Lent 4.....	Hosea 2:14-23
Lent 4.....	Philippians 1:27-30
Mid Lent 5.....	Job 14:14-17
Lent 5.....	Colossians 2:16-23
Mid Lent 6.....	Zechariah 11:4-14
Lent 6.....	Hebrews 7:11-22
Maundy Thursday.....	1 Corinthians 5:6-8
Good Friday.....	Leviticus 16:1-34
Easter 1.....	Jonah 2:2-9
Easter 2.....	John 5:25-40
Easter 3.....	Acts 13:16-41
Easter 4.....	Ezekiel 37:24-28
Easter 5.....	Revelation 20:1-15 or Revelation 12:1-17
Easter 6.....	2 Kings 4:18-37
Easter 7.....	Joel 2:21-27
Pentecost.....	1 Kings 22:5-28
Holy Trinity.....	Micah 7:18-20
Proper 3/Epiphany 4.....	Isaiah 26:1-21 or 4:2-6 or 19:18-25 or 63:7-14
Proper 4/Epiphany 5.....	1 John 2:12-14
Proper 5/Epiphany 6.....	2 Chronicles 6:3-11
Proper 6/Epiphany 7.....	2 Peter 1:2-15
Proper 7/Epiphany 8.....	2 Timothy 3:10-15
Proper 8.....	Deuteronomy 6:1-9 or Jeremiah 29:4-14
Proper 9.....	Jeremiah 29:4-14 or Deuteronomy 6:1-9
Proper 10.....	Ruth 4:9-17
Proper 11.....	Luke 14:15-24

Proper 12.....	Ezra 1:1-4
Proper 13.....	Galatians 4:21-31
Proper 14.....	Esther 8:15-17
Proper 15.....	Ephesians 1:15-23 or Ephesians 6:1-9
Proper 16.....	Psalm 1:1-6
Proper 17.....	Philemon 4-7
Proper 18.....	Ecclesiastes 12:1-7, 13-14 or Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
Proper 19.....	2 John 3-11
Proper 20.....	Song of Songs 8:6-7
Proper 21.....	3 John 2-8
Proper 22.....	Zephaniah 3:9-13
Proper 23.....	Jude 1-4
Proper 24.....	Malachi 3:6-12
Proper 25 (if observed).....	see Proper 27 below
Reformation.....	Joshua 1:1-9
All Saints.....	Obadiah 15-21
Proper 27 (if Proper 25 is not observed).....	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
Proper 28.....	2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
Proper 29.....	Nahum 1:15-2:2 [MT 2:1-3]
Thanksgiving.....	Habakkuk 3:17-19

If the First Sunday in Advent falls on November 27, the following adjustments will need to be made: There will be only one Sunday (January 1) between Christmas and the First Sunday after Epiphany. To use this lectionary under those circumstances use 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 on January 1, and use 1 Timothy 3:14-16 on the Sunday immediately following the Feast of the Holy Trinity, after which you would resume with the next appointed “Proper XX” text.

If the First Sunday in Advent falls on December 3, the following adjustments will need to be made: There will be only one Sunday (December 31) between Christmas and the First Sunday after Epiphany. To use this lectionary under those circumstances use 1 Chronicles 5:1-2

on December 31. In this situation 1 Timothy 3:14-16 will be an extra text, so that it must be used in an extra service; for example, for a service on Ascension.

The recommended schedule for the use of 1 Timothy 3:14-16 and 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 during other years is as follows:

<b>OCCASION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TEXT</b>
Christmas 1	Dec. 26	1 Timothy
Christmas 1	Dec. 27	1 Timothy
Christmas 1	Dec. 28	1 Chronicles
Christmas 1	Dec. 29	1 Chronicles
Christmas 1	Dec. 30	1 Chronicles
Christmas 2/Epiphany	Jan. 2	1 Chronicles
Christmas 2/Epiphany	Jan. 3	1 Chronicles
Christmas 2/Epiphany	Jan. 4	1 Timothy
Christmas 2/Epiphany	Jan. 5	1 Timothy
Christmas 2/Epiphany	Jan. 6	1 Timothy

## THOUGHTS ON THE TEXTS

### ADVENT 1: TITUS 1:1-4

Advent is a season of the church year when we think of time: God's ancient promises of salvation; Christ fulfilling those promises at the proper time; his future return to take his people to eternal life. The salutation of the letter to Titus touches on all three of these epochs of time.

Often we feel like prisoners of time. As we look at the history of salvation—past, present, and future—we see our Christian hope and the meaning that gives to our existence in time.

### MID-WEEK ADVENT 1: PROVERBS 8:32-36

The biblical view of wisdom plays an important role in Biblical Christianity—especially during Advent (the first of the seven “O Antiphons”). The section running from Proverbs 8:22-9:6 has many Christological overtones. As 8:22-31 and 9:1-6 each have a place in the three year lectionary, 8:32-36 seems a natural choice for an Advent text.

These verses provide an opportunity to speak of Christology. These also contain important instruction on listening to the word of God.

### ADVENT 2: DANIEL 7:1-14

Christ's favorite way of referring to himself was with the appellation “Son of Man,” which is rooted in this vision of Daniel's. One of the ways in which Jesus used this self-designation was to foretell his coming again in glory and judgment.

All of this makes this a fitting text for an Advent homily. Daniel's words present our Lord in both his humility for our salvation and in his glory, in which he gives us a place.

As portions of this reading is appointed as one option for Proper 29, Series B, the preacher might choose to preach on Daniel's other vision of four world empires and the rule of Christ, recorded in Daniel 2.

### MIDWEEK ADVENT 2: HAGGAI 2:6-9

The prophet Haggai foretells the greater glory of the rebuilt temple. This prophecy points us to Jesus replacing the temple as the means to forgiveness (John 2:19-22).

Our Lord had greater glory than Solomon's temple. He is therefore, the way to greater glory for us.

**ADVENT 3: GENESIS 49:8-12**

In fulfillment of this prophecy Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah. He was born to be a “ruler,” but a ruler unlike any other. Thus, this text points to the victory and kingdom that is ours for the sake of Christ.

**MIDWEEK ADVENT 3: AMOS 9:11-15**

This is a rich text. Verse 11 points to God’s promise of a savior from David’s line (2 Samuel 7). It mentions the return from exile as a sign of forgiveness (Amos 9:14-15). It points to Christ’s salvation as the restoration of the goodness of creation (Amos 9:13). “The booth of David” points to Jesus replacing the tabernacle and the temple (John 2:19-22). “The land” points to heaven (Hebrews 11:13-16). These are the major themes that can be developed from this word from the prophet.

**ADVENT 4: NUMBERS 24:15-19**

“A star out of Jacob” points to the majesty and deity of Christ (Revelation 22:16). “Scepter” and “dominion” point to his eternal kingdom (Luke 1:33). He would rule in triumph over the enemies of his people (Numbers 24:18), which would include Satan and his hosts (Colossians 2:15). All of this is for us.

**CHRISTMAS EVE: 2 SAMUEL 7:1-17**

This episode is the background to the New Testament’s identification of Jesus as “Son of David” and therefore of the messianic expectation of the entire Scripture. It seems odd that its only appearance in the three year lectionary is in a truncated form for Advent 4, Series B.

So here is the opportunity to preach this text in all its fullness. God’s covenant with David carried the promise of an eternal rule; that is surely good news at the coming of him who was born in the city of David.

**CHRISTMAS DAY: 1 PETER 1:10-12**

Christmas is about the fulfillment of prophecy. This text gives us an insight into the nature of prophecy.

The prophets searched their own prophecies, inquiring about what *person* and what *time* the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating. This text gives us a chance to ponder those things that aroused the interest even of the angels of God in heaven.

**CHRISTMAS 1 (OR CHRISTMAS 2/EPIPHANY): 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16**

This text provides an opportunity to speak about the entire ministry of Jesus. These words point to the truths about a Christmas that is truly worth celebrating.

## **CHRISTMAS 2/EPIPHANY (OR CHRISTMAS 1): 1 CHRONICLES 5:1-2**

Three sons of Jacob give us three lessons about Christmas and the New Year. Reuben shows us the consequences of sin, so that we will repent. Judah reveals that salvation comes through the undeserved grace of God, so that we will believe. Joseph points to the earthly blessings that God also showers on us, often in response to faithful living on our part, so that we will do what is good.

## **EPIPHANY 1: 1 SAMUEL 16:1-13**

At his baptism Jesus was “anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power.” He was anointed to be the Messiah, the Anointed One, the promised one from the line of David.

David’s anointing to be king, therefore, serves as a suitable text for the Sunday of the Baptism of our Lord. His anointing foreshadowed Christ’s own anointing at his baptism.

## **EPIPHANY 2: MATTHEW 8:14-17**

The miracles of our Lord are an important part of his early ministry and hence of the message of the Epiphany season. This portion of the Gospel according to Matthew quotes a portion of Isaiah that we often (and rightly) apply to the death of Jesus. This passage demonstrates that the healing miracles of Christ dealt with more than just the immediate malady. Since sickness and other physical maladies are a consequence of sin, by healing the sick and infirm our Lord was showing that he had come to deal with the root cause of all of these: our sin. This text from Matthew gives opportunity to proclaim that truth about all the healing miracles of Jesus.

## **EPIPHANY 3: MARK 4:10-12, 21-25**

The first parable that Jesus ever told, the sower and his seed, is well known to many Christians. What is probably not as well known is the dual reason for his beginning to teach in parables: both as an act of judgment to hide the kingdom of God to those who had already rejected it (law) and as an act of grace to further reveal the kingdom to those who had embraced it through faith (gospel). This text from Mark offers the opportunity to proclaim both of these messages.

## **EPIPHANY 4/PROPER 3: ISAIAH 26:1-21**

The prophet Isaiah is such a theological giant that even though the three year lectionary contains more readings from him than from all of the other prophets combined, there are still powerful texts from his work not included in the lectionary. Of those that I have suggested I have selected chapter 26 for further treatment.

This chapter, along with chapter 25, contains some of the Old Testament’s most explicate teaching on the resurrection from the dead. While this text could have been chosen for a

number of seasons of the church year, its versatility commends it for us during Epiphany (or, in the event of an extremely early Easter) the semester of the church.

### **EPIPHANY 5/PROPER 4: 1 JOHN 2:12-14**

With his address to “little children,” “fathers,” and “young men” John indicates that he has a message that is applicable to all his readers. That makes this text a suitable one for anytime in the church year.

The apostle emphasizes the word of God as the way to victory over “the evil one.” That too makes this a suitable text for anytime in the church year.

### **EPIPHANY 6/PROPER 5: 2 CHRONICLES 6:3-11**

At the dedication of his temple Solomon offers a long prayer and closes with a blessing. Before either of these, however, he offers a discourse on the significance of this building and of what will go on in it. Thus, we may think of these verses before us as the king’s “homily” on the occasion of the dedication of the temple.

These words about the temple point us to significant truths about our own worship in word and sacrament. Solomon’s words show us how our own worship is something that is truly exciting!

### **EPIPHANY 7/PROPER 6: 2 PETER 1:2-15**

Many Christians are at least somewhat familiar with the powerful words of verses 16 through 21 of this chapter regarding the truth of the Christian faith, the meaning of the transfiguration of our Lord, and the inspiration of Scripture. Perhaps not as many are as familiar with the equally powerful words with which this chapter begins.

Both our faith and our way of living mean that we are people who are not of this world. Peter shows us that we will escape the judgment coming on this world and will be “partakers in the divine nature.” That is truly a breath-taking, awe-inspiring truth.

### **EPIPHANY 8/PROPER 7: 2 TIMOTHY 3:10-15**

Like the previous Sunday’s text this one precedes one of the Bible’s most basic passages on the inspiration of Scripture. Like the previous Sunday’s text this one offers some profound truths of its own.

This text is particularly useful to teach truths about the reality of suffering in the Christian life. Christians suffer for their faith in Christ, but that faith also brings them the joys of eternity.

## **TRANSFIGURATION: EXODUS 40:34-38**

The transfiguration of our Lord was a manifestation of the glory of God. Another such manifestation of divine glory took place at the dedication of the tabernacle. As at the transfiguration so at the tabernacle the glory of God is displayed primarily in his showing his grace for our forgiveness. These verses, like the transfiguration, give us a glimpse of the glory of our eternal salvation, also shown us in God's word and sacraments.

## **MIDWEEK LENT 1; ASH WEDNESDAY: NEHEMIAH 9:6-31**

Ash Wednesday is a time to make confession of our sins. Along with the psalms and Daniel chapter 9, Nehemiah 9 would surely rank as one of the Bible's great prayers of confession.

The prayer of our text recounts God's deeds of mercy and confesses the people's frequent failures to live as those who have benefited from such wonderful deeds ought to live. Such confession is made in hope, for God's past deeds of mercy prove that he will forgive our sins and make us heirs of eternal life.

This is one of the longest of these 66 texts. Those who feel it is too long might consider the shorter but comparable prayer of chapter 1.

## **LENT 1: JAMES 1:1-11**

On the first Sunday in Lent the lessons focus our attention on our Lord overcoming the temptations that Satan imposed upon him in the wilderness. They also direct us to consider the trials and temptations that we ourselves face and our need to overcome them by remaining firm in our faith. These verses from James equip us to deal with the trials of faith that come our way with the humility of repentance and the wisdom that comes from steadfast faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **MIDWEEK LENT 2: JUDGES 2:11-18 (19-23)**

Everyone is religious in one way or another, and everyone's religion either influences or is influenced by the surrounding culture. The ancient Israelites were often negatively influenced by the culture (and religion) that surrounded them. As the Israelites were called to repentance and received God's deliverers (judges), so the Lord calls us to repent and to receive the deliverance only Christ can give. Such deliverance is to show itself in our being a wholesome influence on the world around us—as Christians have often been throughout the history of the world.

## **LENT 2: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:2-4**

During Lent we focus on the cross of Christ. Some find this unpalatable; they are troubled by the weakness of the cross.

This text shows us that the weakness of the cross leads to the power of the resurrection. That same resurrection power is present in the word of God.

### **MIDWEEK LENT 3: LAMENTATIONS 5:19–22**

The book of Lamentations reflects the absolute devastation of the time during which it was written. Yet with its closing verses this book ends on a note of hope.

Lamentations shows the consequences of sin. Nevertheless, these verses also speak of the forgiveness of God as the way we are restored to him and to his favor.

### **LENT 3: ROMANS 16:17–20**

This is an important text for a number of reasons. It proclaims the victory of Christ over Satan, as foretold in Genesis 3:15. It also demonstrates the importance of avoiding doctrinal error. This is a key text on avoiding error and those who hold to it, lest we run the risk of losing salvation altogether. We also need to hold to the entire truth, lest we diminish the impact of our witness to the world.

### **MIDWEEK LENT 4: HOSEA 2:14–23**

The life story of Hosea serves as a vivid illustration of the love of God toward his often unfaithful people. This text affords an opportunity for a powerful retelling of the love of God for Israel—and for us.

### **LENT 4: PHILIPPIANS 1:27–30**

This text sets forth not “good news” in general but the good news of Jesus Christ. The text shows the content of the good news, the power of the good news in our lives, and also the reality that in this life we may have to suffer for holding to that good news.

### **MIDWEEK LENT 5: JOB 14:14–17**

The book of Job contains some rich, powerful texts that unfortunately are not found anywhere in the lectionary. Of these I’ve chosen this one for further consideration.

This text, like the entire book of Job, speaks of the reality of sin and its terrible consequences. Nevertheless, this text also speaks of the forgiveness of sins in a number of ways. In this way these verses also point us to the hope of eternal life—even in the midst of sufferings such as Job experienced.

### **LENT 5: COLOSSIANS 2:16–23**

In life we face the dual temptations of immorality on the one hand and works righteousness on the other. The source of both of these is Satan himself.

In proclaiming Christ's victory over Satan this text directs and empowers us to hold fast to Christ. In this way this text equips us to avoid both immorality and works righteousness.

### **MIDWEEK LENT 6: ZECHARIAH 11:4-14**

Our text is one of this prophet's profound and awe-inspiring prophecies of the passion of our Lord. In the faithlessness of Judas we have a warning of the consequences of falling away from Christ.

Yet this text primarily proclaims the faithfulness of Christ the shepherd toward us. This empowers us to confront the crucified Christ not with disdain but with faith.

### **LENT 6: HEBREWS 7:11-22**

This is one of several texts in Hebrews that proclaims the high priestly work of Jesus Christ. As this rich portrait of Christ is proclaimed, he draws near to us. That enables us to draw near to him in faith.

### **MAUNDY THURSDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-8**

This text's mention of Christ "our Passover" draws our attention to that last Passover meal, when Jesus instituted the sacrament of his body and blood. Our text shows us that the Lord's Supper, like all the Christian faith, is serious business. If we treat it with reproach through the "leaven" of corrupt living, hypocrisy, or insincerity, we will forfeit its blessings. But if we heed the apostle's call to celebrate with sincerity and truth, this will be a time of great blessing.

### **GOOD FRIDAY: LEVITICUS 16:1-34**

There are a number of places in the New Testament that make reference or allusion to the Day of Atonement as being fulfilled and replaced by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Hence, this text affords the opportunity to richly proclaim the meaning of Christ's death. His fulfillment of the Day of Atonement means that, unlike those ancient Israelites, we are not excluded from the gracious presence of God by a curtain—or by anything else.

### **EASTER 1: JONAH 2:2-9**

Our Lord himself taught that Jonah's experience with the whale was a typological prediction of his death and resurrection. In baptism we are crucified, buried, and raised with Christ. That being the case, Jonah's prayer in the belly of the whale points to Christ's resurrection and ours. It is also a prayer that we share, as we live in in a world under the sentence of death.

### **EASTER 2: JOHN 5:25-40**

This text contains some of our Lord's most profound teaching on the resurrection. Here we see Jesus as the way to the resurrection to eternal life and as the one whose resurrection power enables us to live and to witness in this world of death.

**EASTER 3: ACTS 13:16-41**

This is one of the longest “evangelistic” addresses recorded in the book of Acts. It gives us an example of the kind of “evangelistic” preaching carried out by the apostle Paul. Thus, it is a suitable text for any time in the church year, but with its focus on the resurrection of Christ it is especially appropriate for the Easter season.

**EASTER 4: EZEKIEL 37:24-28**

This prophecy from Ezekiel speaks of “David,” that is, the Messiah. It also speaks of “David” as a shepherd of God’s people. It is therefore a prophecy of Christ and a fitting text for Easter 4, Good Shepherd Sunday.

**EASTER 5: REVELATION 20:1-15**

Preaching on this text affords the opportunity to clear up misunderstandings regarding the “millennium.” More importantly, it provides the occasion to proclaim Christ’s victory for us over Satan and therefore our forgiveness and the promise of eternal life.

Another powerful text in the Apocalypse is the vision recorded in chapter 12. Since the middle portion of that reading is appointed for Saint Michael and All Angels I have opted for Revelation 20 instead. You, of course, may choose otherwise.

**EASTER 6: 2 KINGS 4:18-37**

Elisha ranks in importance among the prophets along with Elijah, yet there are no texts dealing with him in the three-year lectionary. This text, with its record of a miracle of resurrection, provides a powerful lesson on God’s blessings both for this life and for the one to come. In it we are also provided with examples of faith, proclamation, thanksgiving, and prayer for all that God has done for us.

**EASTER 7: JOEL 2:21-27**

This portion of Joel follows after the lesson appointed for Ash Wednesday and occurs immediately before the prophecy of Pentecost. Thus, its promises of forgiveness and salvation seem ideally suited for the last Sunday of Easter, the Sunday immediately before our celebration of Pentecost.

**PENTECOST: 1 KINGS 22:5-28**

Many things in the church (and even in the world) are claimed for “the S/spirit.” But the only sure sign of the Spirit is the word of God (Smalcald Articles, III, 8:10). This episode from the First Book of Kings dramatically depicts the difference between the Spirit of God and all manner of false spirits. Holding to the word of the true Spirit may not make us popular—it may even bring us persecution—but it is the only way he has promised to deal with us in grace.

### **HOLY TRINITY: MICAH 7:18-20**

This text is a good one for the feast of the Holy Trinity. It offers the opportunity to respond to versions of the canard “Aren’t all religions the same?” Not only does this text respond to these notions with the truth that there is only one God; it also is rich in language that provides the opportunity for speaking of the gracious saving nature and actions of the one true God. With this text we can proclaim, “Who is a God like you?” Only Jesus Christ.

### **PROPER 3: SEE EPIPHANY 4**

### **PROPER 4: SEE EPIPHANY 5**

### **PROPER 5: SEE EPIPHANY 6**

### **PROPER 6: SEE EPIPHANY 7**

### **PROPER 7: SEE EPIPHANY 8**

### **PROPER 8: DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9**

As the Old Testament lesson for Proper 26 (Series B), the Sunday when either Reformation or All Saints’ Day is likely to be observed, this lesson might never get used. It is far too rich and important to be overlooked.

The “Shema” affords the opportunity to speak about the identity of God and of the mighty things that he has done for our salvation. This text also demonstrates how what God has done beneficially empowers the believer’s entire life to be lived to the glory of God and in thankful service to him.

### **PROPER 9: JEREMIAH 29:4-14**

This Sunday (or the previous one) will fall on or near America’s Independence Day. Lutheranism’s “two kingdoms” doctrine, that is, how God relates to us for our eternal good through his means of grace and how he relates to us for our temporal good through such things as government, provides us with vital insights into Christian citizenship. This text from Jeremiah is as rich as any in setting forth the “two kingdoms” doctrine. Thus, it is a good text to use while the nation may well be in the forefront of our hearers’ thoughts.

### **PROPER 10: RUTH 4:9-17**

Most of us are more likely to consider ourselves to be among the “outsiders” rather than the “in crowd.” More significantly our sin means that none of us belongs to God. For any and all of our issues of not belonging the story of Ruth has an encouraging message of hope. As Ruth the outsider became a part of God’s people, so through her descendant, Jesus Christ, we have come to belong to the only group that matters: the family of God.

**PROPER 11: LUKE 14:15-24**

Only three of our Lord's parables are not included in any form anywhere in the three-year lectionary: the Leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21), the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24), and the Ten Minas (Luke 19:11-27). The Leaven is short, and the Ten Minas has a message similar to that of the Talents (Matthew 25:24-30), so of the three the Great Banquet seems to call most for homiletical treatment. As one of the more detailed parables of our Lord, it has a rich message for those who have ears to hear.

The parable portrays the richness of our Lord's salvation, the consequences of rejecting his invitation, and the humility of faith as the only way to it. Not only does the parable describe this salvation, it also invites us to come and receive it, "for everything is now ready."

**PROPER 12: EZRA 1:1-4**

Israel's return from exile was one of God's mighty acts of salvation in the Old Testament. It was a sign of his forgiveness. Nevertheless, the return seems to get scant attention in our preaching and maybe in our teaching as well. This text affords the opportunity to teach the meaning of the return from exile and how it fits in with God's plan of salvation.

**PROPER 13: GALATIANS 4:21-31**

Galatians has long been prized by Lutherans for its teaching on true Christian freedom. One of the portions of this letter that sets forth this truth is this section. In addition to teaching what Christian freedom truly is, this passage demonstrates that believers in Jesus Christ are the true heirs of God's promises to Abraham.

**PROPER 14: ESTHER 8:15-17**

An oft repeated question about the book of Esther asks what this book that makes no mention of God is doing in the biblical canon. The answer, of course, is that God and his mighty deeds are the presupposition behind every "coincidence" in this book, for there are far too many coincidences in the story of Esther for these to be coincidental.

The text before us gives the opportunity to preach on the entire book. The history of Esther provides the opportunity to show how God's mighty acts of salvation find their fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

**PROPER 15: EPHESIANS 1:15-23**

I suspect that Ascension services are not widely attended, if they are even held. That being the case, this largely unused text ought to be given a hearing. It provides the opportunity to speak of Christ as Savior and as Lord of all. Those who have regularly preached on this text at Ascension might consider 6:1-9 as an alternative.

### **PROPER 16: PSALM 1:1-6**

The first psalm serves as a sort of “overture” to the entire Psalter. The wisdom character of this psalm gives the entire Psalter the flavor of a work of wisdom literature. Psalm 1 shows us the key to living life with wisdom: focusing on what will endure. The message of this text, like all of Scripture, has to do with things of eternal value.

### **PROPER 17: PHILEMON 4-7**

The main portion of the letter to Philemon is at least somewhat well known. This thanksgiving section, while not as well known, nevertheless contains a powerful message about the church as the body of Christ. This text helps us to appreciate how we share a faith, a love, a joy, and a reason for thanksgiving with all God’s people.

### **PROPER 18: ECCLESIASTES 12:1-7, 13-14**

Ecclesiastes has an important message, especially for a culture that wants to be pampered and coddled. This book comes to us with a sobering message: Life is meaningless—unless it is lived in a right relationship with God. Ecclesiastes shows us that this relationship can be summarized as fearing God and keeping his commandments.

Another preachable text from this book not included in the three year lectionary is 3:1-8 (a time for everything). I have opted for this text from chapter 12, partly because it affords the opportunity to preach on the overall message of the entire book.

### **PROPER 19: 2 JOHN 3-11**

Our culture often defines love as tolerance—at least tolerance for those things the culture wants to be tolerated. These verses show us that true love must be intolerant of falsehood. This is a message that seems to be especially needed in our world today.

### **PROPER 20: SONG OF SONGS 8:6-7**

The Song of Solomon celebrates marital love as a reflection of God’s love for his people (and therefore of Christ’s love for his church). The love that is so powerfully described in this “crescendo” to the song can only be ours through God’s love in Christ. That love, in turn, will empower us to live out that love in our relationships with others, most particularly in our marriages.

### **PROPER 21: 3 JOHN 2-8**

There are many things that are important in the life of a congregation and of Christians. Among these are love for others and mission to others. This text points out how the truth is essential for these and for everything in the life of the church and of the people of God.

**PROPER 22: ZEPHANIAH 3:9-13**

The concluding gospel of Zephaniah is recorded in 3:9–20. Verses 14–20 are used as the Old Testament lesson for Advent 3 in Series C. Therefore, the remaining verses serve as a suitable text from that prophet.

This text has a message of salvation for all nations. It also contains instruction regarding the life that will follow the gift of salvation.

**PROPER 23: JUDE 1-4**

Probably the most well-known portion of Jude consists of verses 20 through 25, the Epistle lesson for the last Sunday in the church year, Series B. The opening four verses of the letter have a salutary message, and with their exhortation to “contend for the faith” they provide the opportunity to preach on the entire letter.

**PROPER 24: MALACHI 3:6-12**

In Series C, Malachi provides texts for both Advent and the final two Sundays of the church year. Both of these are occasions when the church year directs us to think about the last things. Since the church year is nearing its end with Proper 24, it is fitting that on this day we focus on the last of the Old Testament prophets. These verses contain God’s call “return to me,” even as they foreshadow the coming of Christ, through whom God returns to us in forgiveness.

**PROPER 25 (IF OBSERVED): SEE PROPER 27 BELOW****REFORMATION: JOSHUA 1:1-9**

One of the important themes of the Lutheran Reformation was its stress on the word of God and the blessings it provides. These words directed to Joshua also highlight the word of God and demonstrate how God’s word is the only way to the only success that might aptly be described as “good success.”

**ALL SAINTS: OBADIAH 15-21**

On All Saints’ Day we think about eternal life. The prophet Obadiah’s words regarding “Jacob” and “Zion” point to God’s gift of eternal life for his believers and in so doing show us the way to that life without end.

**PROPER 27 (IF PROPER 25 IS NOT OBSERVED): 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12**

As we approach the end of the church year, it is fitting that we take a look at the two letters to the Thessalonians with their emphasis on the last things. The present text from the first letter (appointed for Series A for the seldom observed Proper 26) not only shows us what God has done, does, and will do for our salvation but also gives us instruction as to how, therefore, we are to live.

### **PROPER 28: 2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-12**

As we draw nearer to the end of the church year, it is fitting that we follow a lesson from 1 Thessalonians with one from Paul's second letter to Thessalonica. This reading (from Series C for the underused Proper 26 readings) provides strength for endurance in view of the many afflictions that we Christians face in this life, as we await the return of Christ in glory.

### **PROPER 29: NAHUM 1:15-2:2 [MT 2:1-3]**

The book of Nahum is largely an oracle of God's judgment. These verses provide important guidance as to how this book (and all the "Gentile oracles" of the Old Testament) are to be understood. God's judgment on the enemies of his people is also an act of deliverance for his people. Ultimately, that deliverance is also our deliverance from Satan and all his attempts to lead us to eternal damnation. That is real peace, and that is good news indeed.

### **THANKSGIVING: HABAKKUK 3:17-19**

The concluding oracle of Habakkuk is a powerful text. It dramatically shows that we have God's love, even if we are lacking in the good things of this life. That makes this text fitting for many occasions, but Thanksgiving, which is observed by many of those around us largely if not exclusively with emphasis on worldly good, seems an especially suitable time.

# SUGGESTED OUTLINES

## ADVENT 1: TITUS 1:1-4

### PROCLAMATION OF A PERMANENT PROMISE

Time often seems like an endless cycle that goes nowhere.

Hence, time—and life—seems meaningless to many.

This is because of the fall, for because of it our only future is one of condemnation.

Only the creator of time could deliver us; he promised salvation.

Many promises are broken, but this promise is different.

This is the promise of the God who never lies.

This promise (of salvation) was made before there was even a need for it.

Christ came to fulfill this promise, one that had been repeated many times in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Christ, our savior, was born at the proper time to enter our history, so that in history he might fulfill the promise made by God, our savior.

This salvation is as eternal as is the life of the Christ who rose from the dead.

And so we have hope; we have something good to look forward to.

This is ours through faith, “the knowledge of the truth.”

Faith doesn’t save, if directed to the wrong object.

Saving faith is directed to the truth of what Christ did in history for our salvation.

God makes this known through proclamation, the word about what is eternal.

That makes worship and study of the word something that is truly exciting!

This gives meaning to our present existence, so that unlike those without hope we are motivated and empowered to live with godliness.

We live life with *godliness*.

Godliness is displayed especially in the way we treat other people, especially toward those with whom we share “a common faith.”

We are no longer prisoners of time. Through his proclamation God’s promise gives us permanent blessings—now and forever.

## MID-WEEK ADVENT 1: PROVERBS 8:32-36

### THE WAY OF WISDOM

In whatever we do in life, wisdom is a quality that is always desirable.

Wisdom is being in harmony with God; hence Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God.

Christ is the second person of the Trinity and the agent of creation.

Christ is (the wisdom of) God become man (Colossians 2:3; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

Christ revealed God’s wisdom chiefly by way of the cross.

Christ reveals that wisdom to us through his word (1 Corinthians 1:17-24).

We receive that wisdom through believing in Christ (through “listening” to wisdom).

In this way we obtain favor from the Lord.

Therefore, we have life, eternal life.  
We are to listen to wisdom “day after day.”  
This brings blessing, to our lives and to our Christmases.  
It is urgent that we listen to wisdom and not neglect it.  
Without wisdom we have only death.  
This is true also of those who simply ignore wisdom.  
This is the only way to escape death and to receive life.  
Hence, during this Advent season we earnestly pray for wisdom to come to us.

## **ADVENT 2: DANIEL 7:1-14**

### THE SON OF MAN IS THE KING OF KINGS

Christ’s self-identification as the Son of Man is rooted in this vision of Daniel’s.

The one “like a son of man” is as different from the kingdoms of the world as a human is from the beasts of the earth.

But we are inferior to almighty God; we are sinful.

Christ is vastly superior to anything of this world.

Christ is equal with God the Father.

This truth is also set forth in Revelation chapter 1.

The kingdoms of the world appear glorious.

Jesus was born in great humility.

Jesus lived a humble life.

Jesus humbled himself to death on a cross.

He did this to save us from the consequences of our sin.

He was glorified by his resurrection from the dead.

Hence, the glory of his kingdom is given to us (Daniel 7:27).

Daniel 7 also foreshadows Christ’s return in glory.

The kingdoms of the world will pass away.

Hence, the kingdoms of the world can give no real good to those who follow them.

Christ’s kingdom is as eternal as his resurrection.

Daniel’s vision encouraged him not to follow after the ways of Babylon.

His vision encourages us not to cast our lot with the kingdoms of the world.

Put your trust in this one like a son of man, for the Son of Man is the King of Kings.

## **MIDWEEK ADVENT 2: Haggai 2:6-9**

### GREATER GLORY

The world and the things of the world have a certain glory and attraction about them.

Wealth is one such attraction.

Pleasure is another thing that entices us.

Fame or reputation is something else that can have a hold on us.

Churches are not immune to these sort of temptations.

God’s Old Testament people were not immune to such temptations either.

This caused them to trust in the temple of the Lord instead of the Lord of the temple.  
The prophets repeatedly warned the Israelites, but in time there was exile and the destruction of the temple.

This was a prophecy of the final judgment (Haggai 2:6–7a).

Yet in time they were able to return, to rebuild the temple, and to restore its rites of forgiveness.

But the rebuilding of the temple lagged and eventually came to a standstill.

Haggai preached repentance and emphasized rebuilding the temple.

The people listened and acted accordingly.

Yet this temple lacked the glory of Solomon's temple.

Yet this temple would have greater glory (Haggai 2:7b).

Jesus came to this second temple.

Jesus replaced the temple as the means to forgiveness (John 2:19–22).

That is the greater glory of which the Lord spoke through his prophet Haggai.

This glory cannot be shaken, disturbed, or diminished—not ever.

The church is a temple and the body of Christ; it is a source of eternal salvation.

The church's ministry of word and sacrament gives the glory of eternal salvation.

That's the kind of ministry worth experiencing.

This is real peace; this is peace with God.

This can survive divine shaking.

This is greater glory.

### **ADVENT 3: GENESIS 49:8-12**

#### HE HAS COME

How have you been waiting for Christmas?

Our eager waiting gives us a taste for how God's people of old waited for the salvation which now has come.

Our text is one of the earliest promises of salvation: Jacob's blessing of Judah.

The one to come is a king (Genesis 49:10).

David, from the tribe of Judah, and his descendants ruled in the Old Testament.

The words "until he to whom it belongs comes," point to Christ.

He was of the tribe of Judah, born in Bethlehem, and is the lion of the tribe of Judah.

This king has a universal rule: "Obedience of peoples will be his."

During his earthly ministry Jesus often spoke of the "kingdom of God."

This king wins the victory (Genesis 49:8–9).

Christ battled against Satan, who accuses us before God.

Christ won the victory by his death for our forgiveness and resurrection for our justification.

The victory is ours through trust in the victorious Christ.

Jacob spoke of the splendor of this king's prosperity (Genesis 49:11–12).

Our prosperity is unsurpassed; it is the banquet of eternity.

The long wait is over; this king has come.

## MIDWEEK ADVENT 3: AMOS 9:11-15

### “I WILL RESTORE THE FORTUNES”

There are many natural disasters.

There are many evil people who make our lives hard.

We have physical and emotional challenges.

The church on earth is not all that it should be.

The root cause of all this is Sin, as can be seen from Genesis 3:16-19.

Amos had to rebuke similar sins in his day, but he also gave the promise of our text.

Amos 9:11 points to God’s promise of a savior from David’s line (2 Samuel 7).

Exile would be punishment for sin; return would be a sign of forgiveness (Amos 9:14-15)

The return would foreshadow forgiveness through the ministry of Christ (Luke 3:4).

Christ’s forgiveness brings eternal salvation as the restoration of the goodness of creation (Amos 9:13).

Jesus indicated this by his miracles of new creation, for example, changing water into wine.

“The booth of David” points to the tabernacle and temple as God’s instrument of forgiveness.

Jesus replaced that function of the tabernacle and the temple (John 2:19-22).

“I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel”; Christ’s church is the new Israel.

We “are called by [God’s] name” in baptism.

“The remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name” means that this salvation is for all peoples and nations.

“The land” points to heaven (Hebrews 11:13-16).

“Plant vineyards and drink their wine” points to the banquet of eternity (Matthew 26:29) and to its foretaste in the Lord’s Supper.

Eternal life involves the restoration of God’s original, unblemished creation (Amos 9:13).

These are the blessings God has restored to us for the sake of Christ.

## ADVENT 4: NUMBERS 24:15-19

### A STAR OUT OF JACOB

The star is a common sight at this time of year.

The Lord God moved a prophet named Balaam to speak about another kind of star.

Balaam asserts he is speaking the truth; he would have been glad to curse the Israelites.

This is a far distant figure: “but not now . . . but not near.”

“A star out of Jacob” points to the majesty and deity of Christ (Revelation 22:16).

He will be from Jacob/Israel; he will be from the people from whom salvation had been foretold.

“Scepter” and “dominion” point to his eternal kingdom (Luke 1:33).

He would wage war against his enemies; Moab and Edom are examples of these.

Christ came to wage war (Isaiah 9:4-5) against the devil and his hosts (Ephesians 6:12); for our salvation he waged war against them on the cross.

His resurrection showed him to be victorious (Numbers 24:17).  
 He would be in triumph over Satan and his hosts (Numbers 24:18; Colossians 2:15).  
 His dominion (Numbers 24:19) would be universal.  
 His kingdom is eternal—for us.  
 “Israel is doing valiantly”; contrary to appearances God’s people are the most blessed.  
 He is coming again to judge the living and the dead.  
 To escape judgment and to receive his salvation we must follow him in faith.  
 Such is the marvel, the splendor, the victory of a star out of Jacob.

## **CHRISTMAS EVE: 2 SAMUEL 7:1-17**

### SON OF DAVID

In the Christmas Gospel of Luke David is mentioned more often than Jesus is.  
 David is also mentioned often in Christmas music; why is this?  
 David is mentioned to highlight God’s keeping the promise recorded in our text.  
 We are often tempted to be faithless, as Saul was, and to follow the way of the world.  
 The demise of King Saul shows us what will happen if we are not faithful to Christ.  
 David wanted to build a temple; God had his own plans: Solomon built the temple,  
 and there was an ongoing line of kings descended from David.  
 This promise of an “anointed one,” the Messiah, was fulfilled in Christ’s birth in the city  
 of David, Bethlehem.  
 “I will be a father to him”; Christ is the very Son of God born in human flesh.  
 So Christ replaced the temple as the place of God’s presence among men.  
 This temple was destroyed and rebuilt in three days to forgive our sins.  
 The risen Christ fulfills the promise of a kingdom established “forever.”  
 “I cut off all your enemies from before you”; Christ won the victory over sin, death,  
 and the devil.  
 The rest given to David foreshadows our greater, eternal rest.  
 We receive these blessings through faith in the one born in Bethlehem.  
 Hence, it is worth it to remain faithful to Christ.  
 We follow him faithfully.  
 Through his word and his sacraments we draw strength to remain faithful to him.  
 We also worship him faithfully.  
 Being faithful to him means we will also structure our lives accordingly.  
 He is worth following, for he is born as the Son of David.

## **CHRISTMAS DAY: 1 PETER 1:10-12**

We have waited for Christmas for a long time, and finally it is here.  
 Old Testament believers, especially the prophets, waited centuries for Christ’s coming.  
 The prophets foretold the coming of Christ.  
 It was really the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophets that did this.  
 The prophets were diligently searching and inquiring into this salvation which the

Spirit of Christ in them was foretelling.

They were “inquiring as to what *person* . . . the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating.”

They were also “inquiring as to . . . what *time* the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating.”

Christmas provides us the answer to those questions.

The angels, who themselves have no need of any of this, long to catch a glimpse of it.

The prophets were prophesying concerning grace and inquiring about salvation.

The sufferings of Christ were the sufficient price for our forgiveness and salvation.

The glories to follow included his resurrection, descent into hell, ascension, and rule over all the universe; these proved he had won our eternal salvation.

Angels long to “peer”; this word is used of those looking into Christ’s empty tomb; angels were present at the empty tomb, for it testifies to what Christ did for our salvation.

“They were serving not themselves but you”; He did it for all believers of all times.

“Now have been announced to you” through the Old Testament and the New.

This proclamation has the power of the Holy Spirit to work faith and give salvation.

And so the same Holy Spirit has been present with us this Christmas Day.

And so the angels have also been interested in what went on here today.

And so we worship today “with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.”

So think about it; what else could you have done this morning that would have aroused the interest of the angels of God in heaven?

## **CHRISTMAS 1 (OR CHRISTMAS 2/EPIPHANY): 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16**

### THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

The world’s Christmas is over.

The world’s Christmas does not last.

The world’s Christmas often disappoints.

The world’s Christmas may even distract us from its true meaning.

The world’s Christmas could even lead us into damnable false belief.

We could get sucked into the world’s short-lived, distracting, and damnable Christmas.

We need what our text calls “the mystery of godliness.”

It is a mystery because our sin has made it hidden from us.

Foretold in the Old Testament, it was a mystery, because it was not then fully known.

This mystery was revealed with the coming of Jesus Christ.

It was “manifested in the flesh”; Christ was God come in human flesh.

It was “vindicated in spirit, seen by angels”; Christ rose from the dead by the return of his human spirit to his body; angels were present at his empty tomb.

He was “taken up in glory”; his ascension further confirmed that he is the Son of God.

This is the message “proclaimed among the nations.”

It is to be “proclaimed among the nations,” since Christ came for all.

It has been “believed on in the world”; the Christian faith is “catholic,” universal.

That is the truth, the truth that saves.

Therefore, the Christmas message of Jesus Christ lasts forever.

The church is “a pillar and buttress of truth,” because it proclaims this truth.  
 The church is “the church of the living God,” for it proclaims a message that has power.  
 The “mystery of godliness” is “great indeed,” for it is the only saving truth.  
 This empowers us to behave “how one ought to behave in the household of God.”  
 Hence, we do deeds of charity all the year round.  
 God does all this through his powerful word, also his *written* word.  
 The mystery of godliness has been revealed to us to believe it and to proclaim it.  
 The joy of the real Christmas goes on forever. That is the mystery of godliness.

## **CHRISTMAS 2/EPIPHANY (OR CHRISTMAS 1): 1 CHRONICLES 5:1-2**

### TWO REALMS

We’re in the Christmas season, and we may be thinking about New Year’s resolutions.  
 Three sons of Jacob give us three lessons about Christmas and the New Year.  
 Reuben lost the right of the firstborn by his “affair” with one of his father’s wives.  
 Genesis 49:3-4.

Sin has consequences, eternal damnation.

From Reuben we can see that sin may even have its consequences in the world.

Our sins are just as damnable; Matthew 5:28.

God provided a solution, 1 Chronicles 5:2, a deliverer and ruler from the line of Judah.  
 Points back to Genesis 49:10.

King David came from the tribe of Judah.

To David the Lord promised one from David’s line with an eternal kingdom and rule.

This promise was often repeated; Ezekiel 34:24; 37:25.

The deliverer would even be born in David’s city, Bethlehem; Micah 5:2.

Jesus was this ruler but with a rule that meant a right relationship with God.

He brought a rule of forgiveness (Matthew 18:23-27).

He did this by way of his death and resurrection (Matthew 21:33-46).

His rule means eternal life.

This is all by grace; Judah was just as unworthy as Reuben (Genesis 38).

This salvation is ours by grace through faith in Christ—without any good works.

The birthright passed on to Joseph, for by his faithfulness and godly living Joseph received all manner of earthly blessings from God.

Joseph was faithful in spite of many hardships and eventually became a powerful ruler.

Joseph’s wise use of power saved many, including the line of the savior (Judah).

His two sons became patriarchs of two of the premier tribes of Israel.

We are saved without works, but we do works, and God may give earthly rewards for those works done out of faith.

There are two kinds of righteousness. Earthly righteousness comes by upright living, but eternal righteousness comes only for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Three lessons: from Reuben, repent; from Judah, believe; from Joseph, do what is good.

## **EPIPHANY 1: 1 SAMUEL 16:1-13**

### THE LORD'S ANOINTED

There is a basic problem that we all have. We need to be made right with God.  
We have sinned, and so we are not right with God.  
Therefore we should be afraid of God.  
We need someone to set us right with almighty God.  
Saul seemed to be the one that we needed, but he proved that he was not the one.  
We should also see how easy it is for us to follow after similar false deliverers.  
Even Samuel thought one of Jesse's older sons must be the one.  
There are many things that seem to offer what we need but which fail us.  
God's choice of David points us to the true means by which we are set right with God.  
David seemed to lack the necessary qualifications.  
Nevertheless, David was the Lord's chosen.  
So David became the Lord's *anointed*.  
The Holy Spirit came on and remained on David—unprecedented for OT leaders.  
David became Israel's king par excellence.  
God promised David that a descendant of his would have an eternal rule.  
For all of these reasons David was a prophecy of the savior to come: Jesus Christ.  
Jesus came as the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ.  
Jesus was the only one qualified to be the true Messiah.  
David was anointed with oil; Jesus was anointed at his baptism.  
Jesus was anointed with power; Acts 10:38.  
As David was despised, so was Jesus; John 1:46; Mark 6:3.  
He was rejected to the depths of hell: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"  
Many reject Christ also today.  
Christ was forsaken for our forgiveness, which we receive through faith in him.  
As David was a shepherd, so was Jesus; John 10:11, 17-18, 27-28.  
At his baptism God anointed Jesus to be the Lord's Anointed.

## **EPIPHANY 2: MATTHEW 8:14-17**

### HE TOOK OUR ILLNESSES

Have you ever been sick or injured?  
These have come into our existence as a result of our sin.  
That doesn't mean that every illness is a specific punishment for some specific sin.  
Nevertheless, every sickness ought to be a reminder to us of our sin.  
We need not just a doctor or healer but also a savior.  
Because of sin we are also subject to the devil and his evil spirits.  
Satan and his minions sometimes take possession of people.  
The power of the demonic is also seen in notoriously evil people and acts.  
But we are all subject to Satan and worthy of divine wrath and eternal damnation.  
Jesus came to deal with all of this.

Jesus healed sickness and cast out demons to show that he had come to deal with the root cause of sickness and of demon possession; he had come to deal with sin itself.

Sickness and demon possession are distinct consequences of sin.

Christ's healings fulfilled the OT promises of healings in the time of salvation.

The healings of Jesus also proved him to be the Messiah (Matthew 11:4).

The healings of Jesus also pointed to the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 9:1-8).

These pointed to Good Friday and Easter (Isaiah 53:4).

Jesus "cast out the spirits with a word."

The word of Christ works with power to deliver even today.

"He touched her hand"; the touch of baptism and the Lord's Supper also forgive us.

In eternal salvation there will be no sickness.

Christ may miraculously heal today, but when we pray for healing, we always do so adding the petition "nevertheless not my will but yours be done."

May Christ's healing miracles always point us to our eternal healing in the resurrection.

### **EPIPHANY 3: MARK 4:10-12, 21-25**

HE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR

Warfarin is a prescription blood thinner.

It can also be used as a rat poison.

The dosage determines if it works as a healing medicine or a poison.

It must only be used under the supervision of a physician.

The Scriptures are similar—not that only pastors can supervise their use, although your pastor is a good aid for you in the use of the Scriptures.

As with Warfarin the misuse of the Scriptures can bring immeasurable harm.

The word of God has the power to save.

The same word, if it is ignored or otherwise misused, can bring the wrath of God.

Prior to our text Jesus had revealed himself as Messiah and Son of God.

Jesus had done this by his teaching (Mark 1:22, 27).

Jesus had done this by his actions (Mark 2:1-12).

Yet there were those who did not believe and who criticized and rejected Jesus.

Some had accused him of being in league with Satan, cutting themselves off from the grace of God (Mark 3:22, 28-30).

Thus, partly as an act of judgment, Jesus began to teach in parables (Mark 4:11-12).

His ultimate revelation is the cross, which is also rejected by many.

The cross is rejected as offense or folly (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Christ crucified is the only way to forgiveness and salvation.

If the word is persistently rejected, it may be taken away altogether (Amos 8:11-12).

The word may be taken away from large groups of people (Luther, AE 45:352; Africa may be becoming the center of world Christianity—see African hymns in *Lutheran Service Book*).

If we ignore the word of God, we may have the word taken away from us altogether.

But the word is the only way in which Christ has chosen to reveal himself to us.  
The word is the means Christ uses to give us eternal life.  
We receive eternal life only through believing in Jesus Christ and in him crucified.  
Rejecting the word brings death; believing the word brings forgiveness and eternal life.  
Christ calls us to hear his word. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

## **EPIPHANY 4/PROPER 3: ISAIAH 26:1-21**

### STRENGTH AND SONG

Life is hard, because of other people and because of your own failures.  
Life is hard, because God is judging the world.  
Hence you need strength, one which comes only from God.  
Our text speaks of the strength of salvation, which only God can provide.  
We lack righteousness before God, which is why life is hard.  
Jesus Christ provides that righteousness by his death and resurrection.  
His resurrection means our resurrection from the dead (Isaiah 26:19).  
Therefore, we have the only peace that matters: peace with God.  
This is ours, *only* because of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 26:13).  
And this is ours, *solely* because of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 26:12).  
And so we have strength, strength to meet this hard life.  
Through faith we have the strength we need (Isaiah 26:2).  
Faith means trust (Isaiah 26:3).  
Trust in Christ for peace and strength in the midst of this hard life.  
This means hope, that is, having something to look forward to.  
Hope involves waiting on the Lord (Isaiah 26:8b).  
Hope means also yearning and longing for the Lord (Isaiah 26:9).  
This is a refuge in this hard life (Isaiah 26:20).  
Worship in word and sacrament provides us this sort of refuge.  
That gives us a song to sing, a song of vigor.  
Ours is a song of vigor, because it is all about the strength that God provides.  
That means eternal joy, not just fleeting happiness.  
Wake up and shout for joy, for because of Jesus Christ you have strength and a song.

## **EPIPHANY 5/PROPER 4: 1 JOHN 2:12-14**

### YOU HAVE CONQUERED THE EVIL ONE

The Scripture refers to Satan as “the ruler of this world.”  
Make no mistake about it; Satan is real, and he has real power.  
Satan’s rule is seen in the immorality that is rampant in the world.  
The abundance of evil in Satan’s rule is matched by a lack of love.  
Only God can give a real solution to the challenge of Satan’s rule.  
Because he is “from the beginning” Christ can overcome Satan and his rule.  
He does this through the forgiveness of sins, so that Satan can no longer accuse us.

He does this through the word of God.  
 “Sins are forgiven you through his name” in baptism.  
 We know God through faith in him, faith which receives the forgiveness of sins.  
 We know Christ “who is from the beginning.”  
 John also speaks of knowing the Father.  
 Through all of this we “have conquered the evil one.”  
 Also the message of Revelation 12:10-12a.  
 And so we have also conquered the world.  
 We are God’s children through faith in Christ, and so we receive all his blessings.  
 Men are to be spiritual leaders in the family.  
 Fathers are fellow pastors who are to teach the faith and live accordingly.  
 So we have power to live free of the control of Satan.  
 This includes the power to love others.  
 Love is not a more intense form of liking; it is an act of the will.  
 So that is how we are to live. We are to live showing love to others.  
 And that is especially true of how we treat our fellow believers.  
 Therefore, the task before us is to live in a way contrary to how the world lives.  
 We have strength for this through remaining in the word of God.  
 You have conquered the evil one, for the word of God remains in you.

## **EPIPHANY 6/PROPER 5: 2 CHRONICLES 6:3-11**

### A HOUSE FOR GOD’S NAME

Is there anything important or even meaningful about what goes on in this building?  
 Is what goes on in here boring?  
 Is what goes on here irrelevant to our lives?  
 How does what goes on here compare with what goes on anywhere else?  
 Should we perhaps make what goes on here fit in more with what the world wants?  
 Our text gives us insight into what goes on in a worship service like this.  
 What goes on in a place like this is carried out by the God of the exodus.  
 This pointed beyond itself to the death and resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ.  
 God’s promise to David was fulfilled in part with Solomon and the temple.  
 Jesus fulfilled the promise to David by his death and resurrection.  
 God chose the means by which he would give salvation to people.  
 God chose the temple and the Ark of the Covenant (the Day of Atonement).  
 God has chosen to do this through his word and sacraments.  
 “The house for my name” was where God was present in forgiveness and salvation.  
 God is present in forgiveness and salvation in baptism in his name.  
 We begin our worship services invoking the name into which we were baptized.  
 The ark contained the written word of God.  
 We have the written word of God.  
 God’s covenant is his promise of eternal blessings.

God's covenant was fulfilled through the one who gave "the new covenant in [his] blood."  
 Solomon blessed the worshipers by proclaiming God's mighty deeds of salvation.  
 A pastor who faithfully proclaims the word of God does the same.  
 We turn to those things that God has chosen to be the way to our salvation.  
 David didn't get to build the temple; our lives don't always turn out as we expected.  
 What goes on here is truly exciting!

## **EPIPHANY 7/PROPER 6: 2 PETER 1:2-15**

### NOT OF THIS WORLD

As Christians we are in the world but not of the world.  
 That means that we do not withdraw from the world, as some Christians attempt.  
 We are still sinful, and by withdrawing we are not able to be in mission.  
 The world is naturally opposed to God.  
 It is for this very reason that the world is perishing.  
 We deserve God's judgment as much as the most ungodly people of the world.  
 Peter writes about God's "divine power," which is his power to save.  
 The power and majesty of God to save is seen in Christ's death on the cross.  
 Peter speaks of the things that God has promised; these were fulfilled in Christ's death.  
 Our text speaks of "him who called you." God calls us through the gospel.  
 The "knowledge" of Christ is faith in him.  
 So we have forgiveness, "the cleansing of . . . sins."  
 That is the way to "your entrance into the eternal kingdom of . . . Jesus Christ."  
 This means that we will not perish with the world.  
 So we will be "partakers in the divine nature."  
 In the meantime we are still in the fallen world.  
 The knowledge that is faith also shows itself in a life of good works.  
*Virtue* is the quality that proves itself by the character of everything that you do.  
 Knowledge here refers to the knowledge of God, which we have through his word.  
 We also are to display self-control.  
 In all of this we need to show endurance.  
 We are to add godliness, living in full accord with God's revealed will.  
 We add brotherly affection, acting in service to our fellow believers.  
 Moreover, we show love to all.  
 These things are the fruit of faith.  
 "I always remind you," through the word, so that your faith does not wither up and die.  
 That is why Peter wrote this letter.  
 Peter wrote this for a reminder to all generations (2 Peter 1:15).  
 This is what all of Scripture does (2 Peter 1:19; 3:15-16).  
 That's what our lives as Christians are like. We are in the world but not of the world.

**EPIPHANY 8/PROPER 7: 2 TIMOTHY 3:10-15**

## CONTINUE IN WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Falsehood often seems to get the upper hand.  
 There was plenty of that around, when Paul wrote to Timothy.  
 The history of Christianity is replete with examples.  
 There are plenty of deceivers around today who are themselves deceived.  
 We could be enticed into following a belief that will lead to damnation.  
 When it comes to our eternal future the truth is absolutely essential.  
 There is only one truth that saves. It is the truth about Jesus Christ.  
 Falsehood often seems to reign in this world, while those who hold to the truth suffer.  
 There is sin in the world, and Christ suffered to rescue us from sin.  
 Christ's resurrection assures us of our salvation.  
 Christ acquired our salvation, the Scriptures give it to us.  
 The salvation given by Scripture is received through faith alone.  
 It is essential that we remain in the truth that saves.  
 That is why the apostle directs us to the Scriptures.  
 Paul writes especially of the Old Testament Scriptures.  
 Paul himself was the author of a number of the documents of the New Testament.  
 The Scriptures are also to be taught by the family at home.  
 As Christ suffered, so must we (2 Timothy 3:12).  
 Hence, Paul commends to Timothy his long-suffering and endurance.  
 We also respond to persecution with love.  
 Christ empowers us to endure in the face of persecution.  
 "Yet the Lord rescued me from them all."  
 As we face sufferings for the sake of Christ, he will give us the strength to endure.  
 He will give us eternal life.  
 You cannot lose the joy of salvation, if you "continue in what you have learned."

**TRANSFIGURATION: EXODUS 40:34-38**

## GOD'S PRESENCE IN GLORY

Does God ever seem far away from you?  
 The presence of God can be destructive to us.  
 The "glory" of God's presence prevented Moses from entering the tabernacle.  
 That same truth was demonstrated at the transfiguration of our Lord.  
 These episodes both point to the sinfulness of us all.  
 But the glory of the Lord God was present for the forgiveness of sins.  
 On the Day of Atonement the blood was shed at the tabernacle for forgiveness.  
 The same things was done in future years in the temple.  
 Jesus appeared in glory on the mount of transfiguration to show that he is God.  
 Christ's "exodus" (Luke 9:31) would be the way to forgiveness.

John 1:14; 2:19–22: Jesus is God present in glory, grace, and forgiveness.  
That was the meaning of the cross (John 12:23; 13:31).  
The church is God’s temple; forgiveness is given through word and sacrament.  
Thereby the glorious presence of God is no longer destructive to us.  
So we can experience the glory of God (2 Corinthians 3:18).  
This is indicated by Moses appearing with Jesus at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:30–31).  
The glory of the transfiguration gives us a glimpse of the glory of heaven.  
God’s glory led Israel to the Promised Land.  
The promised land of Canaan was a foreshadowing of our heavenly promised land.  
And that gives meaning to life, which is often difficult.  
God is near in his word and sacraments; what could be more glorious than that?

## **MIDWEEK LENT 1; ASH WEDNESDAY: NEHEMIAH 9:6–31**

### A GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL GOD

Our text leads us in making confession of our sins.  
The prayer of our text begins with a reference to the beginning, to creation.  
God made his promises of salvation to Abraham.  
These promises have all been fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ.  
By the exodus God brought Abraham’s descendants out of slavery.  
The cross and resurrection of Jesus corresponds to this.  
God made his covenant with Israel at Sinai: “I will be your God.”  
Covenant: Lord’s Supper, ministers of a new covenant, forgiveness of sins.  
The Israelites worshiped the golden calf.  
We have often failed to keep God’s law.  
God was faithful; he gave the Israelites manna and water.  
1 Corinthians 10: this points to the Lord’s Supper.  
God gave Israel the Promised Land.  
This pointed to eternal life in heaven.  
The Israelites actually talked about returning to Egypt.  
We often think more about earthly things than eternal blessings.  
Nevertheless, God gave them the Promised Land.  
Even then the Israelites often disobeyed the Lord.  
They even killed his prophets.  
God gave them over to their enemies to punish them and to call them to repentance.  
Life is often hard for Christians; thereby God may be disciplining us and calling us to repentance and faith.  
But the Lord also delivered Israel from their oppressors.  
In word and sacrament God remains faithful to us in providing us with eternal life.  
As our text says, he is a gracious and merciful God.  
As by the prophets so by his word God bestows on us forgiveness and eternal life.  
Like the Israelites we need to repent and to have faith in Christ.

God's word tells us what God has done for our salvation.  
It is time to make confession to a gracious and merciful God.

## **LENT 1: JAMES 1:1-11**

### COUNT IT ALL JOY

Life is often a trial of faith.

Unbelievers seem to have as good if not a better lot in life than Christians.

In fact, Christians are persecuted in one fashion or another.

Jesus faced trials by Satan in the wilderness, and he successfully overcame them all.

He was tested again in Gethsemane, but responded, "Not my will, but yours be done."

On the cross he was tempted to come down, but he was obedient unto death.

By doing so he won forgiveness of sin; trials are a reminder of the sin of which we are guilty.

And so there is need to repent: "Let . . . the rich [boast] in his humiliation"; cf.

1 Timothy 6:17.

We need this type of humility, the humility of repentance.

And we also need the humility of faith, the humility of relying on Christ for salvation.

Faith is the way to the wisdom of which our text speaks.

Wisdom is harmony with God and with the way he created all things ("very good").

Sin meant that God had to reveal this wisdom to mankind; he did this in Christ.

This wisdom comes by way of the cross of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

This wisdom is given by the word of the cross and is received through faith.

That wisdom enables us to "count it all joy . . . when you meet trials of various kinds."

With that wisdom we can see that the world and all that is in it is passing away.

With that wisdom we see also the folly of trusting in riches (James 1:10-11; 1 Timothy 6:17).

With the wisdom that God gives we see also that our trials produce steadfastness.

Steadfast faith in Christ results in eternal perfection.

Faith must never be overcome by doubt.

To strengthen our faith in the face of doubt we turn to the word of God (Ephesians 4:11-15).

"The twelve tribes in the Dispersion"; we are dispersed in a pagan world, as was Israel in exile, but Christ will never forsake us, just as he never forsook his Old Testament people.

As believers in Christ we are in the Dispersion; and in one way or another the unbelieving world will persecute us.

But trials lead to steadfastness, which leads to eternal perfection.

So, don't be overcome by all the trials of this hard life. Instead, count it all joy.

## **MIDWEEK LENT 2: JUDGES 2:11-18 (19-23)**

### SACRED AND SECULAR

Everyone is religious in one way or another.

Any religion has certain religious practices, even if they are non-traditional.

How someone practices his religion is his cultus.

Cultus and culture are related; your culture is the way your cultus is lived in the world.

Now our cultus ought to shape and influence our culture.

Moreover, our cultus should also influence the culture in general, as Christianity historically has done (Alvin Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*).

That's the way it ought to be; sadly often the opposite is true.

In the days of the judges; the Israelites did not drive out the Canaanites.

Over time the Israelites began to accommodate themselves to the values of the pagans.

For the sake of mission we cannot withdraw from the world.

We should engage the culture in a positive way.

If we do not intentionally engage it, it will influence us—usually for the worse.

Satan and his hosts often influence culture and use culture to influence us.

The false gods of the Canaanites were the chief threats to the Israelites.

Baal and Asherah were deities of fertility.

The Israelites whored after other gods by engaging in sexual activity.

Many moderns look to sex for good; thus, sex is their god and religion.

This religion may include child sacrifice, namely, abortion.

God will punish sin and unbelief, if not in this life, then in the life to come.

God's acts of judgment call us to repentance, as the Israelites did when they groaned.

God may be using our cultural hardships to call us to repentance.

The judges were means of God's salvation; he saves us by his word and sacraments.

The judges led the Israelites to stay faithful to the Lord.

To stay faithful we need the regular use of word and sacrament.

The Israelites benefited from the judges. We benefit from faithful pastors.

We are blessed when our worship—our cultus—is what God would have it be.

But the Christian's cultus also favorably affects his culture, his secular life.

This means that our personal culture will conform to God's will.

Part of that is critiquing the culture in light of God's word.

By word and witness we will provide a wholesome influence on the culture.

And the strength to do that comes from cultus, from God's word and sacraments.

That is the Christian life. It is both sacred and secular; both culture and cultus.

## **LENT 2: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:2-4**

### **POWER FROM WEAKNESS**

In the biblical story of the taking of the town of Ai the Israelites' initial retreat was the way to victory.

Military strategy often works like that.

Sports (such as a screen pass in football) is another arena where it may happen.

Surgery starts with weakness but ends in strength.

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ is a case study in power coming from weakness.

The lowliness of Christ's life reached its furthest extent in his death.

The cross gave way to the unsurpassed power and glory of his resurrection.  
In this way Christ earned our forgiveness.

By his resurrection from the dead Jesus won our own resurrection to eternal life.  
The Christian's life is characterized by the lowliness of repentance.

"We are weak in him"; we are crucified with Christ in baptism.

"We will live with him by the power of God"; we were raised with Christ in baptism.

Just as we were raised in our baptism, so we will also be raised at the last day.

Our resurrection with Christ in baptism empowers us for godly living.

"We will live with him by the power for God—*for you.*" This is the power of the church's proclamation (1 Corinthians 1:22-25).

". . . while absent . . . when present"; the written word has the same power as the spoken word.

"We are weak in him," for the word is all that we have.

But then, the word is all that we need; "Christ . . . is powerful among you."

"I will not spare them." We speak all of his word—also his word of law.

And we most assuredly do not neglect to speak his word of gospel.

In our life of faith and proclamation weakness is actually the way to strength.

### **MIDWEEK LENT 3: LAMENTATIONS 5:19-22**

#### RESTORED

The book of Lamentations was written during a time of absolute devastation.

So what similar things are happening in your life?

Jerusalem fell because the people, by and large, had ignored the word of the Lord.

The things that trouble us in this life are a consequence of our sinfulness.

"But you, O Lord, reign forever"; God will punish sin.

So we deserve for God to forsake us forever in hell.

God caused the fall of Jerusalem and the exile to call his people to repentance.

When bad things happen to us, God is calling us to repentance.

Our text stands as a testimony to the repentance of at least some of the people.

The prophet does not plead for forgiveness because of anything in the people.

Instead, our text grounds its plea for forgiveness not in anything in man but in God.

God would not utterly reject them; he would not be wrathful forever.

The Lord God had made his covenant; its promises would endure forever.

And so God allowed the Israelites to return; from them Christ was born as the savior.

God is always there in his word (Isaiah 55:6, 10-11).

"Restore us to yourself"; the Israelites needed to be restored.

Through his act of forgiveness God restores us.

"But you, O Lord, reign forever"; with him there is life without end.

Through God's forgiveness we will have a place in his eternal, glorious kingdom.

That is ours through faith in him who was crucified and raised.

This text gives us a lesson in how to repent.

The Lord reigns forever, but he will not forget us. Through Christ we are restored.

### **LENT 3: ROMANS 16:17-20**

#### WISE AS TO WHAT IS GOOD

The world is evil, because Satan won a victory in Eden.

But Satan's victory would give way to his defeat (Genesis 3:15).

"... will soon crush Satan under your feet," Jesus is the fulfillment of those words.

On the cross Satan bruised the heel of Jesus.

Christ not merely bruised the head of Satan; he crushed his head.

Christ forgave those things of which Satan might accuse us.

"The God of peace *will* soon crush Satan" at the final judgment.

Our forgiveness and salvation is a gift of grace.

It is necessary to guard this gift, lest it slip away.

For this reason we need to hold to the whole truth of God's word.

And that means also rejecting all error and false teaching.

(Romans 16:17, 19) We need to hold to the whole of Scripture.

That means also that we are to practice all that we teach (Romans 16:19).

This means that we are to watch out for all manner of error.

The apostle's directive "avoid them" refers to avoiding fellowship with all in error (1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15).

To be indifferent to doctrinal error is to risk being led astray from the faith altogether.

Even unintentional error can endanger our spiritual wellbeing.

We need to hold to the truth. Furthermore, we need to spread the truth.

We spread the truth by proclaiming the word of truth.

Our way of life may be the entryway for non-believers to come to the Christian faith.

The truth is the way to be wise as to what is good.

### **MIDWEEK LENT 4: HOSEA 2:14-23**

#### YOU ARE MY PEOPLE

There once was a pastor, let's call him Hunter, with a wife named Gretchen.

Three children were born to them.

But Gretchen carries on an affair with a younger, better looking, and wealthier man.

Hunter wonders if he is even the father of the third child.

Gretchen divorces Hunter, who still loves her.

The pastor turns to the Lord in prayer.

Gretchen's new husband divorces her, but his bankruptcy leaves her broke.

In love Hunter takes Gretchen to all their favorite places, and it rekindles in her the love that she once had for him.

They remarry, and in time Gretchen doesn't even remember the name of her paramour.

This made-up story is a modern retelling of the true story of the life of Hosea.

After three children Hosea discovers his wife has been unfaithful.

In time she left the prophet, even though he still loved her.  
 In time she found herself abandoned and sold into slavery.  
 By love and buying her out of slavery Hosea rekindled in his wife her love for him.  
 The life's story of Hosea was a dramatic illustration of the history of God's love for Israel.  
 This story is about the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.  
 Israel became a nation of slaves in Egypt, from which the Lord God freed them.  
 At Sinai he promised to be their God, then he gave them the land of Canaan.  
 In time Israel turned to the worship of Baal, the god of the pagan Canaanites.  
 They were religiously promiscuous, as Baal's worship involved sexual activity.  
 The Lord raised up foreign empires to carry Israel into slavery and exile in foreign lands.  
 From this the Israelites learned repentance.  
 As the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt, so he brought them out of exile.  
 "Israel is my firstborn son"; we are sons of God through baptism and faith.  
 We have often been disrespectful and disobedient to the Lord who loved us.  
 God's only Son has given his life on the cross that we might have forgiveness and life.  
 God gives that mercy to us in his word and sacraments, which remind us of his love.  
 We are the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5).  
 God has shown the same love to us as he showed to Israel (Romans 9:25-26).  
 And all that means a place for us in the marriage feast of the Lamb in his kingdom.  
 Such is the love that fills us with love for him; "You are my people."

## LENT 4: PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

### THE GOOD NEWS

Things that are good news often don't last.  
 If nothing else does, death will make an end to all of our good news.  
 So what we need is good news that will last.  
 The gospel is good news that far surpasses any others.  
 The gospel is the solution to really bad news, eternal damnation in hell.  
 The gospel is good news about what Christ has done to be the solution to the bad news.  
 The gospel is good news, because the gospel is about Christ's death and resurrection.  
 The gospel is God's gift; the gospel actually *gives* forgiveness and salvation.  
 Therefore, the gospel saves us from death and eternal damnation.  
 The gospel saves through faith.  
 The gospel saves through faith, and the gospel saves by giving faith (Philippians 1:29).  
 The gospel gives the faith that saves, for the Holy Spirit works through the gospel.  
 The gospel empowers a change in the way we live, one worthy of the gospel of Christ.  
 We are to be "striving side by side for the faith of the gospel."  
 We are to be "standing firm in one spirit," striving for the one true gospel.  
 The gospel has a specific content—it's given us in the Holy Scriptures.  
 We also suffer for Christ's sake (Philippians 1:29).  
 Paul instructs us to be "not frightened in anything by your opponents."

Some of that opposition comes from unbelievers.  
And there may even be some opposition from those who call themselves Christians.  
“This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation.”  
The last day will bring us salvation (Philippians 3:20–21).  
Until that day we join with the apostle in setting forth the gospel (Philippians 1:30).  
That is the true good news; it is good news that goes on forever.

## **MIDWEEK LENT 5: JOB 14:14–17**

### WAITING FOR RENEWAL

Death is something evil.  
And because of sin life isn't so good either.  
Death makes even a charmed life meaningless.  
Death and difficulty are both the results of sin.  
We are guilty of transgression.  
We are guilty of sin.  
We have iniquity; we are worthy of eternal damnation.  
God will “long for the work of [his] hands.” He wants to save us.  
What we need is the forgiveness of our sins.  
Jesus Christ provides the forgiveness of our sins.  
Our text speaks of the forgiveness of sins in a number of ways.  
“My transgression would be sealed up in a bag.”  
“You have plastered over my iniquity.”  
“You would not keep watch over my sin.”  
“If a man dies, shall he live again?” Because of Christ's resurrection the answer is yes.  
At the last day he will call us from our graves. We will answer by rising.  
“For then you would number my steps.” God cares for our earthly needs as well.  
“For then you would number my steps.” God care about every little detail.  
The Lord gave Job relief from all his horrible sufferings.  
We can be certain that whatever our difficulties God will provide relief.  
“I would wait, till my renewal should come.” We wait with hope.  
We wait with hope for the day when Christ will call us to the renewal of eternal life.

## **LENT 5: COLOSSIANS 2:16–23**

### HOLD FAST TO CHRIST

To drive safely you must avoid the ditch to the left and the ditch to the right.  
That's the way it often is in life.  
While avoiding immorality we must not fall into works righteousness.  
While trusting in Christ we must not think we can live immorally.  
Satan tempts us to think we can do whatever we want.  
Satan also tempts us to think we can earn our salvation.  
The apostle Paul taught the Colossians to do the good deeds that God directs.

Other teachers came to teach them they had to keep the OT ceremonial law.  
 Though they claimed visions from God, theirs was a teaching of man.  
 The source of this teaching ultimately is Satan himself.  
 So it is that this teaching will, in fact, lead to God's eternal condemnation.  
 OT ceremonies were a shadow pointing to Christ.  
 Christ fulfilled the Old Testament promises, in fact, the entire Old Testament.  
 Shadows and pictures may point to something good, but they are not the good thing.  
 Christ died for our forgiveness; he rose from the dead that we might have eternal life.  
 By what he has done for us Christ sets us right with God.  
 In this way Christ defeated Satan and his accusations.  
 This fulfilled and brought to an end the Old Testament ceremonies.  
 We are not obligated to do anything that God has not imposed on us in his word.  
 This salvation and freedom is given us in our baptismal death with Christ.  
 And this is received by us through faith in Christ and not by works.  
 This means that we are no longer trying to save ourselves.  
 We hold by faith to the only one who can give us life eternal.  
 False teaching like this is a mere appearance of wisdom.  
 That's how we hold fast to Christ, the Head. That's how we avoid both ditches.

## **MIDWEEK LENT 6: ZECHARIAH 11:4-14**

### THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

Our text is a sort of play about the faithful shepherd and how we should regard him.  
 The "sheep" were responsible for their plight; as a result, God had punished them.  
 Nevertheless, the Lord sent them a good shepherd; this foretells the coming of Jesus.  
 The staff "Favor" points to God's kindly attitude of favor toward us.  
 The staff "Union" points to the unity of believers with one another.  
 Zechariah's efforts were not appreciated by the owners of the sheep.  
 Christ was despised by those he had come to serve, such as Judas, his betrayer.  
 All this points to our times of indifference or even betrayal toward Jesus.  
 "Give me my wages" was one last chance to accept the benevolent Lord.  
 Jesus greeted Judas as "friend," giving him one last chance.  
 In his word and sacraments our Lord is like that with you and me.  
 Thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave; they despised the shepherd.  
 "Cast it to the potter," their disdain brought the disdain of God against them.  
 Judas disdained Jesus; he cast the thirty pieces, thereby fulfilling this prophecy.  
 Thus, our text brings us to a crossroads; do we disdain Jesus or do we follow him?  
 The breaking of the staves shows us the consequences of disdaining Jesus.  
 This sad chapter in biblical history is matched by the similarly sad end of Judas Iscariot.  
 What will be our attitude toward Christ: disdain or faith?  
 Although we may have been faithless, he always remains the faithful shepherd.

## **LENT 6: HEBREWS 7:11-22**

### WE DRAW NEAR TO GOD

Do you ever wonder where God is and what he is up to?  
If God seems far away now, well he will be farther away—in hell.  
Being separated from the presence of God is a result of sin.  
God gave the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.  
But the Levitical priesthood was only a temporary arrangement (Hebrews 7:11).  
The Old Testament sacrifices were a means to the forgiveness of sins.  
But these were also a temporary arrangement (Hebrews 10:1, 4, 11).  
And so we read in our text “the law made nothing perfect.”  
We need “another priest [who] arises in the likeness of Melchizedek.”  
Jesus was a different kind of priest (Hebrews 7:13-14).  
His priesthood was confirmed by an oath from God himself (Hebrews 7:20-21).  
Christ was able to acquire forgiveness of sins once and for all.  
(Hebrews 7:26-28); the death of Jesus Christ was the once and for all sacrifice.  
Jesus was separated from God for us (Matthew 27:46).  
Christ’s “indestructible life” gives us life “forever.”  
Christ makes intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).  
“This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).  
And this means eternal life.  
That means a better hope for this life.  
Because of Christ God is not far away; we can draw near to him through Christ.  
In his word and sacraments he is always near to us, so that we may draw near to him.

## **MAUNDY THURSDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-8**

### CELEBRATE WITH SINCERITY AND TRUTH

What goes on here tonight is serious business.  
How we do so will determine whether we eat and drink to detriment or blessing.  
The language of our text draws our attention to the first Passover.  
The Lord who came to put to death also provided a way of escape.  
As a result of this, Pharaoh let the people go.  
The Israelites left Egypt for the Promised Land.  
Paul shows that all this pointed to the work of Christ.  
Jesus Christ was sacrificed, so that we might have the forgiveness of our sins.  
The death of Christ means life for us.  
The Passover was also a meal that the Israelites observed every year.  
At the Passover Jesus gave the holy supper of his body and blood.  
“Celebrate . . . with the unleavened bread,” like the first Passover was.  
The new Passover meal, the Lord’s Supper, gives us the salvation that Christ won for us.  
The salvation we receive in this meal also empowers us for godly living.

At the first Passover in Egypt the Israelites were to cleanse their homes of leaven.  
 “Cleanse out the old leaven”; we are to purge our lives of the old, corrupt ways of living.  
 The Corinthians were tolerating an overt case of sexual immorality.  
 We must reject any and every form of sexual immorality (Ephesians 5:3-5).  
 “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”  
 We reject false conduct, and we reject false teaching (Matthew 16:12).  
 We must not succumb to no religion at all (Mark 8:15).  
 The truth is to characterize doctrine, conduct, speech, in fact, everything.  
 Sincerity is to characterize every aspect of our lives.  
 We are to examine ourselves to receive this sacrament to our blessing.  
 Repentance, belief, and intent to amend our lives is all a part of this.  
 It is a serious business that we have come to tend to.  
 Let us heed the words of God through his apostle Paul.

## **GOOD FRIDAY: LEVITICUS 16:1-34**

### THE DAY AND WAY OF ATONEMENT

We all know what it is like to be excluded from something desirable.  
 We are excluded from the joys and benefits of the blessed presence of God.  
 Adam and Eve and also Moses experienced this same exclusion.  
 The Holy of Holies was a reminder of this exclusion.  
 We deserve to be excluded from the presence of God.  
 God provided the Day of Atonement as a way to the forgiveness of sins.  
 The high priest carried out the rites of the Day of Atonement.  
 The rites of the Day of Atonement involved sacrifice and blood.  
 The blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat and on the altar of sacrifice.  
 One goat was sacrificed; the other carried sins away from the presence of God.  
 The corpses of the sacrificial animals were burned outside the camp.  
 Hebrews 10:4: there remained a need for forgiveness.  
 The Day of Atonement shows us how costly the forgiveness of sins is.  
 The rituals of the Day of Atonement also point us to Jesus Christ.  
 Jesus was a priest of a different kind to offer a sacrifice of a different kind.  
 On Good Friday Jesus sacrificed *himself* and shed *his* blood for forgiveness.  
 Romans 3:25: Jesus replaced the mercy seat/atonement cover.  
 Hebrews 13:12: “So Jesus also suffered *outside the gate* in order to sanctify the people.”  
 Jesus overcame the devil (Colossians 2:13-15).  
 Hebrews 10:10: Christ did this once for all.  
 Hence, at Jesus’s death the curtain in the Jerusalem temple was torn in two.  
 In our church no curtain divides us from the altar that represents God’s presence.  
 Revelation 21:22; 1 John 3:2: In heaven we will be directly in God’s presence.  
 That is the wonder pointed to by the Day of Atonement.

## **EASTER 1: JONAH 2:2-9**

### OUT OF THE BELLY OF DEATH

Did you ever have a brush with death?

Do you ever feel yourself among those who feel as though they might as well be dead?

Life is like that, isn't it, constantly being eroded away by death.

Even while we live, we are constantly dwelling in the belly of death.

Life is overcome by death, because we are at odds with the creator and giver of life.

Jonah was not right with God; he was in the belly of death, from which he spoke the words of the psalm—the prayer recorded in our text.

We draw strength and encouragement from the experience of Jonah.

Matthew 12:40: Jonah foretold the death and resurrection of Christ.

Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12: We have experienced this in our baptism.

Romans 6:4: Our baptism changes us from disobedient to obedient.

Jonah's stay in the whale may be thought of as an experience like unto baptism.

Already raised with Christ in baptism, we will rise with him at the last day.

Jonah's prayer uses the past tense; God answers our prayers before we speak them (Isaiah 65:24).

Like Jesus we pray, "Not my will, but yours be done."

God's "holy temple" was the place of forgiveness; word and sacrament give us forgiveness.

"Their glory will flee"; the pleasures and advantages of this life will not last.

There is but one thing that will last: "Salvation belongs to the Lord."

"I will sacrifice to you with a voice of praise."

We can praise with Jonah, for like him we have been rescued out of the belly of death.

## **EASTER 2: JOHN 5:25-40**

### THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE

In this world we are surrounded by death.

Paralysis, sickness, injury (John 5:3): there are all kinds of evil in our world.

Life is hard, and then you die. Ill health corrupts this life; death ends it.

This is all because of sin.

Death means the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

But that is not all that there is. There is a way to life.

Christ is the way to life. Our text sets forth his credentials to give us life.

One was the testimony of John (John 5:33; 1:19-34).

God the Father also bore witness to Jesus (John 5:37).

Our Lord was witnessed to by his own works (John 5:36b).

The Old Testament also bore witness (John 5:39).

In his ministry Jesus did what God the Father wanted him to do (John 5:30b).

Christ would die and be resurrected for the salvation of the world.

Jesus indicated this elsewhere (John 6:39-40).

The word of God gives salvation, as it bears witness to Christ.

As Jesus indicated (John 5:39-40).

This is through faith, through coming to Jesus that you may have life.

The entire Old Testament bears witness to Christ that we might have faith in him.

Such is the power in God's word.

Christ is our savior, and he is coming as judge of all (John 5:26).

Works are the evidence of the faith in Christ that saves (John 5:28-29).

John 5:25: The resurrection gives us the power to live and witness in this world of death.

John 5:40: Faith in Christ is the only way.

Look on the Son. Believe in him, that you may have eternal life.

### **EASTER 3: ACTS 13:16-41**

#### THE PROMISES OF GOD

Many promises are made in life.

Not a few of these promises are also broken.

So many broken promises produce anxiety in our lives.

The text we have before us this morning is about a promise to send a savior.

God made promises of salvation to Abraham and to David.

God kept his promises by sending Jesus to obtain the salvation that he had promised.

The promises which God has fulfilled relieve our anxiety and worry.

God promised salvation from sin, which is the cause of broken promises and anxiety.

The Jewish religious leaders fulfilled these promises by putting Jesus to death.

Pilate saw Christ's innocence, but he was persuaded to condemn Jesus to death.

"But God raised him from the dead," showing that he had died for the sins of others.

"But God raised him from the dead," showing that he had won our salvation.

Christ fulfilled the promises to Abraham and David, benefiting all of us.

Paul proclaimed this word, for by the word God gives us salvation.

We, therefore, can trust Jesus for salvation.

Jesus always did things at exactly the right time.

The importance of timing in sports shows us the importance of doing things at the right time.

Christ fulfilled God's promises "in the fullness of time."

So he will fulfill his promises to us at just the right time, perhaps only in heaven.

All of this is ours, because Jesus fulfilled the promises of God.

### **EASTER 4: EZEKIEL 37:24-28**

#### HE DWELLS WITH US

Since our lack of holiness cuts us off from what is holy, it cuts us off from God.

In the person of Christ the holy God came to dwell with us to make us holy.

"David my servant will be their prince forever"; this is a promise of the Messiah.

“My sanctuary is in their midst forever” is a promise of Christ. David (= the Messiah) and God himself were called shepherds; this points to Christ. Christ the Good Shepherd laid down his life that we might have holiness. In this way Christ replaced the temple as the source of God’s gift of holiness. He gives this holiness to us in his word and the sacraments. So he makes his covenant with us: he is our God, and we are his people. The prophet called this covenant a covenant of peace. Moreover, our text speaks of an eternal covenant. The return to the Promised Land points to our heavenly Promised Land. “One shepherd” points to the unity of God’s people (John 10:16). Because the Good Shepherd sanctifies us, we lead sanctified lives. Ezekiel 37:28: We have a mission to all nations. We are his people and heirs of eternal life in his kingdom, for he dwells with us.

## **EASTER 5: REVELATION 20:1-15**

### DEATH HAS NO POWER

Any mention of Satan usually elicits one of two reactions. Some are filled with overwhelming, almost paralyzing, fear at the thought of the devil. Others do not fear, thinking that demons are the figment of the imagination of people. Satan is real, and he has power. Demonic possession and notorious evil are examples of his power. Satan can deceive us into believing that we are not in danger of the demonic or of hell. Satan can make people think good is evil and evil is good. Another tool at the devil’s disposal is persecution of all kinds. Satan’s ultimate goal is that we do not put our faith in Jesus Christ. If we do not have faith in Christ, he can be the accuser who accuses (Revelation 12:10). A guilty verdict means the second death; an eternity in hell. Satan is real and powerful, but we have one who is more powerful. Jesus Christ has defeated him for us. Revelation gives different symbols for Christ’s victory over Satan. The thousand years is a symbol of Christ’s ministry and its results for us. Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, so that Satan cannot accuse us. Christ gives us the benefits of his death and resurrection through baptism. Priests who reign refers to believers in Christ as the new Israel, the people of God. Our first resurrection in baptism means the second death will have no power over us. That is what it means to have your name written in the book of life. The second death will have power over others (Revelation 20:10, 15). Works will be the evidence of the presence of that faith that saves us without works. This is a message for all suffering hardship because of their Christian faith. Revelation calls us to faithfulness to Christ, so that we may escape the second death. Trust Christ that you may be among those over whom the second death has no power.

**EASTER 6: 2 KINGS 4:18-37**

## ALL THAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US

“I never asked for this.” Have you ever thought—or even said—something like this? That’s about the attitude that the Shunammite woman had at the death of her son. Job’s attitude (Job 1:21) is better but harder to attain. God gives us what is good, even though we deserve nothing good from him. Though we deserve nothing good, he gives us his glorious, undeserved salvation. The Lord gives salvation; he gives it to us for the sake of Christ. The Lord gives salvation; he gives it to us by way of his word. The Lord gives; he gives salvation—through faith. The Shunammite woman received her dead back through faith (Hebrews 11:35). God give us worldly goods as well (Matthew 5:45). God gives us all that we need (Matthew 6:31-33). God gives worldly good to us, sometimes in response to godly living. The Shunammite woman aided Elisha; as a result, God gave her a son. There are times when God takes away. We might experience loss or failure in this or that undertaking. God takes away. Sometimes this may have to do with living life under the cross. All of these are tests of our faith and our faithfulness to Christ. How should we respond, when God takes away? Christ’s resurrection shows us that we have forgiveness of sins. This means that Christ has given us the ultimate victory. We will rise at the last day. Christ may bring healing or other relief to our sufferings right now. So we ought to speak God’s word—as Elisha did. So we ought to support the speaking of God’s word—as the Shunammite woman did. We ought not use God’s things for personal gain—as Gehazi attempted to do (2 Kings 5). We ought to pray—as the Shunammite woman did. Live with faith, proclamation, thanksgiving, and prayer for all that God has done for us.

**EASTER 7: JOEL 2:21-27**

## THE LORD HAS DEALT WONDROUSLY

Have you undergone any kind of surgery? Was there pain involved? In spite of pain surgery usually makes for a better quality of life. That is how God often works in the world and in the church (Deuteronomy 32:29). So, what pain is there in your life? We usually cannot attribute our pain to some specific sin on our part. Nevertheless, pain is a result of sin’s corruption of God’s good creation. By pain and hardship God is calling you to repentance. God used the locust plague of Joel’s day (Joel 2:25) for that purpose. The Almighty uses many different ways of calling us to repentance. And so we repent, as the OT Lesson for Ash Wednesday (Joel 2:12-19) calls us to do.

But repentance is to be our attitude every minute of every day of our lives.  
 Forgiveness of sins comes from Jesus Christ.  
 The early rain (Joel 2:23) was a sign of their vindication/justification.  
 Justification is a powerful word that Scripture uses to describe the work of Christ.  
 In Joel's time abundant harvest (Joel 2:24) was another sign of God's forgiveness.  
 There is forgiveness even when there is no harvest (Habakkuk 3:17-19).  
 Our text (Joel 2:26) points to the banquet of eternal life.  
 We are no longer subject to the shame (Joel 2:26) of eternal punishment.  
 These blessings come to us through the work of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32).  
 "You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel" through God's word and sacraments.  
 God's word endures forever; that makes our worship genuinely precious and exciting.  
 "Fear not"; the cause of our fears has been taken away.  
 "Be glad . . . and rejoice"; we have a place in the unending and perfect joy of heaven.  
 God calls us to repentance that we may see the splendor of his eternal salvation.

## **PENTECOST: 1 KINGS 22:5-28**

### THE SPIRIT AND THE TRUTH

There are politicians who will make promises that they do not keep.  
 Some things sound good but in reality are not good for you.  
 In the Christian church today there is good news that is not *the* good news, the gospel.  
 Without the gospel of Jesus Christ we are eternally lost.  
 The people of Israel needed a shepherd during Ahab's idolatrous rule.  
 "All us, like sheep, have gone astray"; we need a good shepherd.  
 The Lord God almighty was the shepherd of his people Israel.  
 Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He is the one who gives us eternal life.  
 What Christ has done for us consists of events that took place in history.  
 The gospel is more than true words. Through the gospel the Holy Spirit gives salvation.  
 Hence, what the prophet Micaiah foretold through the word of God came to pass.  
 Even today the Holy Spirit speaks his truth to us in the Holy Scriptures.  
 But there are spirits other than the Holy Spirit.  
 We see an example of this in our text in the false prophet Zedekiah.  
 His was a popular message, but it was false.  
 Like the prophets of our text, what we do cannot make God do anything.  
 We sometimes act as though God's truth is negotiable, as though we can buy God off.  
 Micaiah had the truth, revealed to him in the heavenly council of God.  
 God revealed his truth through the ministry of Christ, which his apostles proclaimed.  
 God has revealed his truth through the Holy Scriptures.  
 Hence, pastors and churches must speak only what God's word says.  
 This is what we must do, even though this may bring persecution.  
 You and I will face persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).  
 Rejecting the truth may drive one further away from the one God who saves.

Our text demonstrates that the truth will prevail.

The Day of Pentecost is a time for us to recommit ourselves to the truth of God's word.

## **HOLY TRINITY: MICAH 7:18-20**

### **WHO IS A GOD LIKE YOU?**

"Aren't all religions the same?" You've probably heard something to that effect.

Christianity is historical, and it is based on what God—not man—does.

So many religions; religion attests to our need to be right with God.

We need to be right with God; he is, after all, God. But we are not right with God.

This is because of our transgression, our "rebellion."

All of this means that God is justifiably angry with us.

Christianity is about what God does to deliver us by forgiving our sin.

God forgives our sin for the sake of Christ.

God "takes away iniquity" by putting it on Christ.

God "passes over our transgression"; at Passover he "passed over" to avert death.

"He will tread down our guilty deeds," and he will tread down Satan (Romans 16:20).

"You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea"; they are gone forever.

This means he "does not retain his anger forever."

He does this out of his "mercy."

He does this out of his "steadfast love."

The Lord *delights* in showing steadfast love to us.

He will always preserve a remnant of faithful believers.

He shows faithfulness.

He confirmed this by swearing an oath (for example, Genesis 15:7-18).

God has made a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:20).

His new covenant is made through word and sacrament (2 Corinthians 3:6)

These are the ways in which God gives us his forgiveness and fulfills his promises to us.

"Who is a God like you?" Only Jesus Christ.

**PROPER 3: SEE EPIPHANY 4**

**PROPER 4: SEE EPIPHANY 5**

**PROPER 5: SEE EPIPHANY 6**

**PROPER 6: SEE EPIPHANY 7**

**PROPER 7: SEE EPIPHANY 8**

## **PROPER 8: DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9**

### ONE LORD FOR YOUR WHOLE LIFE

The following characters are fictitious.

Art seldom attends church and unethically pursues a profit.

Bill attends more, but otherwise his life is no different from those of the unchurched.

Ellen is in church every Sunday, but she is rude and quick to spread gossip and rumor.

They all have a problem with hypocrisy, which is potentially a problem for anyone.

Christianity is only a part of their lives; Christ needs to be Lord for your whole life.

“The Lord,” the God of the patriarchs, is the one whom we need.

“Signs” refer here to the word about the Exodus from Egypt.

Our “signs” are the word about Christ’s death and resurrection (John 2:19–22; 20:30–31).

When we take the word to heart, it permeates our entire being (Deuteronomy 6:6–9).

Believers are to teach this word of God to their children.

“The Lord” is one in contrast to the polytheists about them.

Our own generation worships many things as gods.

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Because our God first loved us, we also are to love him.

We are to love God with all our being.

When God’s word permeates our entire being, then whole-hearted love will show itself.

Then truth, the opposite of hypocrisy, becomes the determining character of your being.

The word of God is the powerful sign of his love which makes us people of the truth.

Confining the word of God to one small part of our lives is a form of hypocrisy.

The word of God has the power to exclude hypocrisy from our being.

The word of God empowers you to live and love as God would have you do.

Be in the word of God that he may be one Lord for your whole life.

## **PROPER 9: JEREMIAH 29:4-14**

### THIS COUNTRY IN LIGHT OF A BETTER ONE

How are we as followers of Jesus Christ to relate to this nation in which we live?

Israel’s homeland pointed to eternal life (Hebrews 11:15–16a).

Israel’s return to the homeland foreshadowed Christ’s redemptive work.

In foretelling the return of the people of Israel the Lord gave them a future and a hope.

In the same way you and I have a future and a hope.

The Israelites in Babylon looked to its welfare; we are to do the same (1 Timothy 2:1–4).

Good government is good for us (Jeremiah 29:7b; 1 Timothy 2:2).

We are to be good Christians and good citizens (Jeremiah 29:5–7).

In time the Lord would topple Babylon; no earthly nation has our ultimate loyalty.

Citizenship accomplishes this-worldly benefits; only God can accomplish eternal good.

*The Spirituality of the Cross* by Gene Edward Veith explains this well.

*How Christianity Changed the World* by Alvin Schmidt shows the benefits

accomplished by good citizenship and godly living.

Your attitude toward this country is to be shaped by your attitude toward a better one.

## **PROPER 10: RUTH 4:9-17**

FOR THOSE WHO JUST DON'T BELONG

Maybe you've always been accepted by the "in crowd," so that the story of Ruth won't have all that much to say to you.

On the other hand, maybe you have sad and bitter memories of being left out.

Ruth was a Moabite who cast her lot with her Israelite mother-in-law.

Ruth was a Moabite who cast her lot with the people (and God) of Israel.

For remaining faithful to the God of Israel, Ruth was an outcast and left alone.

Were some of the times in your life when you have been left out due to your being faithful to Jesus Christ?

Ruth was an outsider to both Moabites and Israelites; how about you?

That is what our relationship to God would be, were it up to us.

We did not belong, so God came into our presence by becoming one of us. The Son of God was born a man, to suffer, die, and rise for our forgiveness and salvation.

Through faith in Christ the vilest wretch now belongs to God.

God used Ruth and her husband's ancestor Tamar (Ruth 4:12) to bring about good.

Through the shame of the cross Christ has brought us forgiveness and eternal life.

From this we learn also to accept those different from us.

This is because Christ died for all (Matthew 8:11).

We are to be ready to share the gospel with all.

As we hold to the faith of Ruth, we belong to God, the only belonging that really matters.

## **PROPER 11: LUKE 14:15-24**

"COME, FOR EVERYTHING IS NOW READY"

From time to time we all receive invitations to various things.

Some of these are not worth accepting.

Our text is about an invitation worth accepting and about how we accept it.

Servants went to those previously invited with the news "everything is now ready."

The banquet or feast is one of the Bible's most beloved pictures of eternal salvation.

"Everything is now ready"; Christ has already provided all we need for salvation.

This banquet depicts the kingdom of God: all that God did for our salvation.

The kingdom came with Christ, who did everything for us to have salvation.

Forgiveness is required for a place at this banquet.

Jesus shared meals with sinners to proclaim himself as the way to forgiveness.

Jesus accomplished this by his death and resurrection.

The poor and other outcasts are invited, for we can do nothing to earn salvation.

This parable is Christ's invitation to us to salvation.

Some people of the parable choose other things over the banquet.

Jesus told this parable in the presence of some Pharisees, the “religious elite.” The Old Testament Scriptures had invited them to the banquet of salvation. The Pharisees chose their religion of the law instead. Many try to find salvation other than through faith in Jesus Christ. Some choose material things over Christ. Marriage and family are important but not as important as Christ. To reject this invitation means enduring the eternal wrath of God. Jesus healed the infirm as a way of proclaiming himself as the way to this banquet. Only those who come “without one plea” can come into this banquet. We can only get in through humble trust in what Christ has done for our salvation. And so he says to you: “Come, for everything is now ready.”

## **PROPER 12: EZRA 1:1-4**

### GOD IS IN CONTROL

The world often seems out of control. Partly for this reason the Christian church often seems to be losing at life. That can be discouraging, but Ezra shows us that God controls all things for our good. The decree of Cyrus spoke of the Lord, the God of Israel. The Lord, the God of Israel is the one true God, the ruler of the universe. The “Lord” is Jesus Christ, who reveals God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The decree of Cyrus made possible the return of the people and the rebuilding of the temple. This fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah (29:10). The return was a sign that God was forgiving all their sin. The rebuilding of the temple made possible the resumption of the Day of Atonement. By his death and resurrection Jesus replaced the Day of Atonement for all time. The Lord stirred up Cyrus in spite of the fact that Cyrus was not a believer. The Lord raises up governments to accomplish his purposes. Cyrus was one of those tools; so was Alexander the Great. Another such tool in the hand of God was the Roman Empire. Rome’s rule led to Christ’s death on the cross to fulfill Numbers 21:4-9. The *Pax Romana* and common Greek language aided the spread of Christianity. God promises to make all things work together for our good. Even in a world that seems in utter chaos, take heart; God is in control.

## **PROPER 13: GALATIANS 4:21-31**

### CHILDREN OF PROMISE

People sometimes choose slavery when they think they’re choosing freedom. What is true in life in general is also true in spiritual matters. That was the issue that prompted the apostle Paul to write his letter to the Galatians. We are tempted to think we can contribute at least a little bit to our eternal salvation.

If so, we will fall under the curse of eternal damnation, the worst slavery of all. Paul has all of that in mind, when he speaks of the slave woman and the like. Isaac was born to Abraham according to God's promise. Through Isaac was fulfilled God's promise of blessing to all through Abraham. Matthew 1 shows Jesus is the fulfillment of blessing for all the nations of the earth. Jesus acquired perfect righteousness before God for all of us. So we who believe in Christ are not children of the slave but of the free woman. We are justified not by works but by faith in Christ. When we believe this promise of God, then we are children of the free woman. As children of the Jerusalem above we have the eternal inheritance. Unbelievers persecute us to believe that works will contribute to our salvation. So not even pious Jews, like Paul before his conversion, can be saved by works. Heaven, not the modern state of Israel, is "the Jerusalem above." You are children of promise. Trust in Christ alone.

## **PROPER 14: ESTHER 8:15-17**

### THE GREAT REVERSAL

The book of Esther shows us how God works for our temporal and eternal good. The Persian king looks for a replacement for his queen. Esther was chosen, and her uncle Mordecai foiled a plot against the king. Haman sought to hang Mordecai and to exterminate all the Jews. Esther interceded, and her people were spared. The Jewish people had been taken into captivity; many still lived in exile. This was an example of the darkness (of sin) in which all people live. Christ came to change our future from one of outer darkness to one of light and life. This is received through faith: "Many . . . declared themselves Jews." "The Jews had light"; heaven is a place of light (Revelation 21-23). "The Jews had . . . gladness and joy"; so do we. "The Jews had . . . honor." Our honor is that of the resurrection to glory. "Salvation is of the Jews"; Jesus was born a Jew to be the savior of all. The story of Esther also assures us that God also cares for our wellbeing in this life. Mordecai, like Joseph and Daniel, served the nation in good circumstances and bad. God will never give us more than we can bear. The history of Esther also teaches us much about the way God's people of faith will live. We are God's people through faith. Faith in Christ includes faithfulness to Christ. Living with faithfulness to Christ may well call for courage. Esther demonstrated courage. Esther and Mordecai served God in their respective vocations. Each of us has many vocations in life; in these we serve God. And this is true, even if our vocations seem to be rather insignificant. And so we see that all our life is about God.

## **PROPER 15: EPHESIANS 1:15-23**

### IN CONTROL

As we look at the world it often seems that those who “have no clue” are in charge. Furthermore, in the face of all this we seem powerless to do anything about it. Satan is “the ruler of this world,” and “the god of this world.”

“Satan” is “the accuser,” because he accuses us before God, and we have sins of which he can accuse us.

Nevertheless, there is a power greater than the power of the accuser’s accusations.

Jesus Christ has forgiven our sins. His innocent suffering and death on the cross was the sufficient price paid to atone for our sins.

With his accusations Satan held us in his power, the power of death and damnation.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ shows that he has power even over death.

The resurrection of Christ demonstrated that we are right with God in spite of Satan’s accusations.

Christ, as both true God and true man, now exercises power over the entire universe.

“Far above all rule;” Christ directs his angels to act for our wellbeing.

Christ has power over Satan’s accusations and his enticements

Christ is in control of everything in the created universe.

This power is “toward us who believe.”

This refers to “the church, which is his body.”

In the Holy Scriptures God the Holy Spirit reveals all this to us by faith.

And so we live with hope.

This is true “not only in this age but also in the one to come.”

This faith moves us to live for Christ, for our fellow believers, and even for those who live life without a clue as to who or what is really important.

In a world in the control of evil keep calm; Christ is risen; Christ is in control.

## **PROPER 16: PSALM 1:1-6**

### THINGS THAT LAST

It doesn’t take any great insight to realize that you should spend your money on what will last.

Moreover, it doesn’t take any great insight to realize that you should spend your time and effort on what will last.

But are our values really shaped by a worldview that pursues the lasting?

It’s far easier to pursue things that are temporary rather than things that are lasting.

What is true in the worldly realm points to the same truths in spiritual matters.

And so we are tempted to join the unbelieving in their deeds.

And we are tempted to join them in their ideas.

We are also tempted to join them in their values.

All of this means that we are tempted to join them in their whole way of life.

If we more and more adopt the ideas, values, and worldview of the world, we may find it impossible to escape their hold on us.

We need another set of values. We need another worldview.

You do not have the power to resist all those things and their attraction, but there is a power available to you that can. It is the power of God's word.

Reading a portion of God's word or recalling some Bible verse is only one small way to do this.

This means regular worship and Bible study and recalling the influence this will have on us.

Through his word God the Holy Spirit shapes our worldview and our being.

So we become the "righteous," those who are right with God.

"Righteousness" is one of the most significant words used to describe what is ours because of Jesus Christ.

This righteousness is through "trust," that is, faith (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

This righteousness is lasting, like a well-watered tree (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

Through trust in Christ you will stand at the judgment (Psalm 1:5-6).

Now there's something of eternal value.

By the word of God righteousness fills and influences your entire being and worldview.

That means that you will be able to choose those things that will endure for eternity.

Psalm 1 shows us the key to living life with wisdom: focusing on what will endure.

Meditate on the instruction of the Lord; then you will be like a tree that endures.

## **PROPER 17: PHILEMON 4-7**

### ALWAYS

John Wesley: There is no such thing as a solitary Christian.

We are part of "one, holy, Christian and apostolic church."

We are part of the "catholic," universal Christian church.

We are not solitary; we are not alone, for we have a common faith.

This faith is "toward the Lord Jesus." We trust in Christ for salvation.

Faith in Jesus Christ gives the resurrection to life in eternal glory, joy, and peace.

Faith in Jesus Christ saves, because he died and rose for our forgiveness and salvation.

Those blessings are given us in God's word and his sacraments.

That faith in turn produces love for others.

The apostle speaks in our text of Philemon's faith and love.

This love is not a feeling at all.

This love is a decision to treat others with love—regardless of any feeling we may have.

Love as a feeling is something that depends, at least in part, on the object of our love.

The love of which our text speaks is quite different.

Philemon had shown love to his fellow believers, whether he found them to be likeable or not.

That is how we "refresh" the hearts of the saints.

Out of love for others we, like Paul, also pray for them.

Through faith in Christ we have “knowledge” of all the good things we have in Christ. Primarily this means the knowledge of our salvation.

The knowledge of faith also includes knowledge of how God keeps us in the faith.

And the knowledge of faith also includes the knowledge of God’s ongoing providence.

Like Philemon we share our faith and love to encourage others.

So we always have joy.

All of this gives us a constant reason for thanksgiving.

There is no such thing as a solitary Christian. For the sake of Christ we share a faith, a love, a joy, and a reason for thanksgiving with all the saints.

## **PROPER 18: ECCLESIASTES 12:1-7, 13-14**

### WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT

“All things in moderation,” is a motto many live by.

“All things in moderation,” including moderation; do not be part of the mushy middle.

Yet the way we are to live as Christians often involves avoiding extremes.

And so a realistic view of life will recognize that life is not all sweetness and light.

Life is not meaningless, if we focus on those things that are truly meaningful.

Whoever you are, *now* is the time to opt for what is really important.

The Lord is telling us here to devote ourselves to what is really important in life.

What is really important in life are those things that God considers to be important.

“Fear God and keep his commandments.”

God’s forgiveness moves us to fear him (Psalm 130:3-4).

Fear is faith that receives the forgiveness of sins.

“. . . and keep his commandments”; true faith will always shows itself in godly living.

Psalm 34:4, 6, 9: The fear of the Lord brings true peace and contentment.

That is what you should do with your life.

That is the answer, and that is the only thing that will last, for everything else will pass.

Ecclesiastes may be Solomon’s repentant musings near the end of his life.

The author laments how youth gives way to old age.

The author laments the hardships of old age.

The author describes death, the return to dust; death makes life futile and meaningless.

“God will bring every deed into judgment”; the wages of sin is eternal punishment.

“The spirit returns to God who gave it”; there is eternal life.

“Fear God” is the way to forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Life is meaningless—unless it is lived in a right relationship with God.

Fear God and keep his commandments. In a nutshell that is what it’s all about.

**PROPER 19: 2 JOHN 3-11**

## INTOLERANT LOVE

Since you love your children, you don't allow them to do anything they want.

We might say that love is subject to the truth; you can't have one without the other.

And even beyond that, in the truth we find the power for love.

In our text John shows us both what truth is and how that truth makes love possible.

The truth has to do with Jesus Christ and with his becoming flesh, the Incarnation.

If you have the truth about Christ, you will have the truth about God.

The truth is more than grace and mercy, but these make up the heart of the truth.

And that means peace, peace with God.

And that changes our future destiny; it means our "full reward," eternal life in heaven.

"What we have worked for"; pastors and others labor in the word of God for us.

And so we see the importance, in fact the necessity, of remaining in the word of God.

And the whole word of God is necessary.

Holding to the truth of God's word means also being intolerant of any other word.

To tolerate another word is to run the risk of losing our salvation altogether.

That includes obeying that portion of the word of God that directs us how to live.

Love for God means obedience to his commandments, which means obedience to his commandment that we love one another.

Love is something we decide to show to others; hence, it is something that we can be commanded to do—as we are commanded in our text and elsewhere in the Scriptures.

That kind of love requires the divine power that comes from the truth of God's word.

Truth is the only way to love, which means that to have love for others you must be intolerant of falsehood.

Hence, we are intolerant of falsehood, because we love others.

Obedience to the truth is the highest form of love; so practice intolerant love.

**PROPER 20: SONG OF SONGS 8:6-7**

## THE SONG OF LOVE

Music celebrates love but also bewails how allusive true love is.

And we have so much music and song about love, because love is also needed.

Love is needed, and it is allusive for love has been corrupted by man's sin.

As a part of the consequences of sin, love and relationships became distorted.

Human history could be written from the point of view of the corruption of love.

There is only one standard of true love; it is the giver of all love; it is God. God loved us.

God's love is at the heart of the message of the Scriptures.

The love of God for us is seen in the cross.

"Love is strong as death; ardor is fierce as the grave"; that aptly describes Christ's love.

And—delightful irony—this love has overcome death and the grave.

Love is "the very flame of the Lord"; in the Bible fire often stands for God's love.

The work of Christ and the Holy Spirit give us the gift of eternal life.  
“A seal”; (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30).  
The love of God is worth sacrificing everything (Matthew 13:44-46).  
In fact, the love of God is even worth suffering for (Romans 8:18, 38-39).  
God’s love in Christ cannot be extinguished, even by suffering and persecution.  
Love within marriage is a reflection of that love that is the flame of the Lord.  
The love of God for us empowers us to love others, including and especially our spouse.  
And so the words of our text also describe the love we are to have for our spouse.  
And so “many waters cannot quench love,” can also describe our marriages.  
We therefore will love with this love even when the world despises us for it.  
In Christ we know that love. In Christ we can sing—and live—the song of love.

## **PROPER 21: 3 JOHN 2-8**

### WALKING IN THE TRUTH

Golf balls weren’t always dimpled, but dimples improve its performance.  
Dimples are important for golfing performance, but it is essential that the ball be round.  
In the Christian life love is important but truth is essential.  
Unfortunately some have wanted to create a chasm between truth and love.  
A variation of this is the effort by some to separate truth and mission.  
Love and mission are important, but it is essential that we have the truth.  
The truth is essential, yet the truth is something that we cannot attain on our own.  
Christ, crucified and risen, is the only way to the truth.  
The word of God reveals the truth, and the word of God bestows on us the truth.  
Thus, the word of God makes it possible for us to believe the truth that it reveals.  
This truth gives us eternal life and changes the character of our being.  
To walk in the truth means that truth characterizes all our being and conduct.  
We look out for the spiritual and the physical welfare of others.  
Spreading the word is one of the most important parts of the Christian life.  
Our witness must be faithful to the truth.  
Pastors are to have a father’s care for their parishioners.  
Parishioners are to respect their pastors as their spiritual fathers.  
Pastors are entitled to make a living from proclaiming the gospel.  
The support of missions is also a way by which we are to be fellow workers for the truth.  
All Christians need to support missions beyond their own congregation.  
All Christians have the privilege of speaking the word of God to others.  
A pastor has no greater joy, than when those in his care are walking in the truth.  
The truth of God’s word brings joy to all Christians.  
It is absolutely vital that we be walking in the truth.

**PROPER 22: ZEPHANIAH 3:9-13**

## NONE SHALL MAKE THEM AFRAID

The commercial showed a skyline view, but it was only a picture in a garage. You don't project success to become successful; you do so by working hard. Neither our projections nor our works will make us "successful" before God. We have failed to keep God's law, and that amounts to our act of rebellion against him. Because we have rebelled against our creator, we are liable to an eternity of his wrath. Our text refers to this as shame, that is, actual degradation that cannot be overcome. Therefore, there is reason for fear.

Yet the Lord has acted to forgive our acts of rebellion.

The Lord does forgive us, but he does so only for the sake of the Good Shepherd. Jesus died and rose for our forgiveness to deliver us from God's reproach.

And so the promise of our text, "they shall graze and lie down," has come to pass.

And so our text continues, "None shall make them afraid."

The humility and lowliness of which our text speaks is the humility of repentance.

Forgiveness and eternal life are received through the humility of faith in Christ.

Our text speaks of Cush (Ethiopia), for this salvation is for Gentiles as well.

Hence, the Christian church is "catholic" in the original sense of that term.

If you attain success, you will project success; being saved, we live in a godly manner.

We are humble instead of proud.

We worship, giving thanks and praise to the God who has saved us.

We serve the Lord through our church and indeed in our entire life.

Our salvation is reflected in the use of "pure speech."

And so we "will speak no lies."

We will not engage in any kind of deceit.

Through Christ the Lord has given us salvation, so that none shall make us afraid.

**PROPER 23: JUDE 1-4**

## CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

There are some people who like to fight; usually Christians are not among them.

In this letter Jude writes that he would have rather written about salvation.

Nevertheless, he notes that he "found it necessary to write to contend for the faith."

We need salvation because of our sin; the letter of Jude catalogues many of them.

Furthermore, we are helpless to change our status.

God delivers us through his mercy and grace.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ brings us forgiveness and eternal life.

Christ is "Lord," true God, as such he could save us.

We are "called" to saving faith through the gospel.

God's free gift of salvation means freedom for us, freedom from sin and hell.

Some have misunderstood and even perverted this freedom into "sensuality."

Some claim this freedom demands “tolerance” of things contrary to God’s word.  
Some claim that Christians are free to practice all manner of immorality.  
Some defend homosexual conduct and “pervert the grace of our God into sensuality.”  
Others pervert the grace of God by claiming that we can do something for our salvation.  
Still others present Jesus as something else less than God himself.  
Jude warned against false teachers, always a danger to the salvation of Christians.  
In these ways many “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”  
Jude speaks in his letter of the judgment from God that will come upon the ungodly.  
Hence, it is vital that we follow the instruction of our text.  
The truths of the faith were delivered to mankind via the Holy Scriptures.  
Our “common” salvation has been held by believers back to Old Testament times.  
This indicates that the saving truth does not change.  
The truth brings peace, true peace, peace with God, the peace of eternal salvation.  
That is what is ours, when we contend for the faith.

## **PROPER 24: MALACHI 3:6-12**

### RETURN TO THE LORD

Did you ever rob a bank? Probably not.  
“Will a man rob God?” Who would or even could rob God?  
Malachi’s fellow Israelites were robbing God by failing to give him tithes.  
Nehemiah and Malachi report this was an ongoing problem.  
If we fail to support the mission of the church, we would be robbing God.  
By a lack of our own personal involvement, we may be robbing God.  
Such things could perhaps be the most grievous sin that any of us have committed.  
Like any sin, sins such as these bring God’s curse.  
So God said, “Return to me,” “return” meaning repent.  
Similarly the Lord calls on us to repent of our failures at serving him.  
God is unchanging, which means also that his forgiveness is unchanging.  
Malachi 3:1 foretells John coming to prepare the way for Christ, who brings forgiveness.  
Therefore, God’s forgiveness is certain, written in history, written in the blood of Christ.  
We have a share in that history of forgiveness through baptism into Christ.  
God dispensed forgiveness through sacrifice; he does so for us in word and sacrament.  
What God gives through the ministry of his church is life saving and life changing.  
Christ calls upon each one of us to contribute to the work of his church.  
And, like the people of Malachi’s day, we are also to contribute our treasure to the Lord.  
Throughout the Scriptures God promises his people that he will provide for their needs.  
God invites us to test him; we cannot out-give God.  
We return to God in repentance; he returns to us in forgiveness.

## **PROPER 25 (IF OBSERVED): SEE PROPER 27 BELOW**

**REFORMATION: JOSHUA 1:1-9****YOU WILL HAVE GOOD SUCCESS**

There are people who have success but who do not have good success.  
 Not all success is good success. Good success is something only God can give.  
 Good success is when God is with you, as he was with Joshua.  
 Good success for Joshua meant successfully entering the land of Canaan.  
 God had promised the ancestors of the Israelites that this land would be theirs.  
 God's promise regarding the land was confirmed by an oath (Genesis 15:1-21).  
 Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt; Joshua brought them into the land.  
 Joshua could bring about this great blessing for the people, because God was with him.  
 God is with us in the person of Jesus Christ, Immanuel.  
 As Joshua had good success for God's people, so did another "Joshua," Jesus.  
 In this our Lord had good success (Isaiah 52:13, where "act wisely" = "good success").  
 Under the leadership of Joshua the Israelites took the land of Canaan.  
 That land looked ahead to heaven (Hebrews 11:13-16).  
 The source of this good success is the word of God.  
 The Lord directed Joshua specifically to the written word of God.  
 The written word of God is the sole source of all that we believe, teach, and practice.  
 We are to meditate on, give deep and serious attention to, the word of God.  
 We are to speak the word to ourselves, to our children, to others in general.  
 We can "be strong and courageous," for we have the word of God.  
 Hence, we will not be frightened or dismayed.  
 A good illustration of this may be seen in the life of Martin Luther.  
 And so the message of our text is a message especially for pastors.  
 Attend to God's word. Then you will have good success.

**ALL SAINTS: OBADIAH 15-21****THE KINGDOM SHALL BE THE LORD'S**

Isaac had twin sons: Esau and Jacob. Esau was the more worldly.  
 Jacob, true to his name, was something of a deceiver.  
 Esau showed not repentance; Edom, the nation descended from him, was idolatrous.  
 Jacob became the patriarch of God's chosen people of the Old Testament.  
 And so in the Scriptures "Esau" and "Jacob" represent unbelievers and believers.  
 Yet it seems that Esau types always have the advantage.  
 The unbelieving often seem to have the advantage over the believing.  
 The unbelieving even persecute the believing, as the prophet Obadiah lamented.  
 The prophet Obadiah points us to a deliverance that is centered in Zion.  
 Zion, Jerusalem, was the place of the temple and sacrifice for the people's forgiveness.  
 In Jerusalem our Lord Jesus replaced the temple by his one sacrifice on the cross.  
 "Zion" also denotes ministry of salvation God carries out through word and sacrament.

“The kingdom shall be the Lord’s”; this kingdom is his rule of salvation.  
“The Day of the Lord is near”; Christ is coming in judgment.  
Christ will punish the unbelieving: “Esau,” “Edom,” “all nations.”  
And the punishment will fit the crime; “as you have done, it shall be done to you.”  
In our text drunkenness is a symbol of sin and its judgment.  
“They shall burn” points to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.  
There will be blessings for “Jacob,” “Israel,” and “Zion,” that is, believers of all times.  
True of those believers who have gone before us, whom we remember this day.  
The lands of our text point to “a better country, that is, a heavenly one.”  
“The kingdom shall be the Lord’s”; compare Revelation 11:15.  
Obadiah assures us that “the Lord has spoken.”  
So remain faithful unto death and so receive the crown of life.

## **PROPER 27 (IF PROPER 25 IS NOT OBSERVED): 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12**

### IN THE KNOW

If you know the owner, you can receive first class treatment.  
If you “know” the game you are able to play it the way it’s supposed to be played.  
We know God, because we “have been taught by God.”  
“Holiness” refers to being perfect; anything less is not holiness.  
Christ suffered and died for the forgiveness of our unholiness, so that we might be holy.  
This comes to us through the word of God.  
Through the word we also have the ability to live as God would have us live.  
This is because in his word and sacraments God “gives his Holy Spirit to you.”  
Thus our lives are different from those around us.  
We use our sexuality as the creator intended it to be used.  
The only blessed way to use our sexuality is within heterosexual marriage.  
“That no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter”; sexual sin harms others.  
The Holy Spirit empowers us to live—also in matters sexual—in keeping with God’s will.  
Since history is the history of salvation, the end could take place at any time.  
Some at Thessalonica misconstrued this truth and lived off the charity of others.  
A Christian as he is able needs to make his own way in the world.  
This includes working for Christ’s church and, in fact, doing everything to his glory.  
All honest labor, however “lowly” it may appear, is a godly vocation.  
We “have been taught by God to love one another.”  
Paul also instructs us, “Mind your own affairs”; don’t be a busybody.  
“Aspire to live quietly.” We don’t need to call attention to ourselves.  
This is all a part of our witness to “outsiders.”  
Because of Christ we know the Holy One, which means we can live lives of holiness.

**PROPER 28: 2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-12**

## ENDURANCE IN AFFLICTIONS

Jesus told his disciples, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.”

Of course, this hatred on the part of the world is of many different kinds.

We are often tempted to respond with revenge or with a loss of faith.

In our text the apostle shows us how we can have endurance in afflictions.

At the last day God will avenge us of all the evil which has been inflicted upon us.

He will take vengeance when and how he sees fit.

We are also encouraged by what the Lord will give to us at the last day.

“Eternal destruction” away from the presence of the Lord will come on unbelievers.

Only faith in Christ makes us “worthy of the kingdom of God.”

This is done out of God’s grace and so for his glory and honor.

Hence, it is vital that our faith endure times of affliction, if we are to be saved.

In his word and sacrament the Lord holds before our eyes the greatness of our eternal salvation, thereby strengthening us to hold fast to our faith in our Lord.

In this way our faith endures, and in this way it also increases.

And when our faith increases, our good works of love increase as well.

That is the only right reason to “boast about you in the churches of God.”

Our text serves to strengthen us to live with endurance in afflictions.

**PROPER 29: NAHUM 1:15-2:2 [HEBREW TEXT 2:1-3]**

## GOOD NEWS OF PEACE

At the battle of Marathon a small battalion of Greeks defeated the Persian army.

Pheidippides ran to Athens with the message of victory and then died from exhaustion.

A victory like this is good news. Rulers are supposed to protect their citizens from evil.

Christ won a much greater victory for us over the ultimate forces of evil.

Our text from the book of Nahum is an announcement of this victory.

Our text is judgment on Nineveh and hence on all the hosts of evil, of Satan.

Defeat of evil means victory for God’s people. Defeat of evil means salvation.

Defeat of evil means defeat of Satan; he tempted Jesus to choose glory over the cross.

Jesus resisted those temptations; he stayed on the cross and was raised from the dead.

Satan is “the accuser.” Christ forgave everything of which Satan could accuse us.

Defeat of evil, such as Nineveh, is also a defeat of Satan.

“He is completely cut off”; the victory is absolute and final.

Our Lord’s word from the cross, “It is finished,” confirms this victory over sin and Satan.

“The Lord has restored the pride of Jacob”; this is a restoration as God’s people.

This is a picture of our restoration to the status of being God’s beloved people.

Victory over enemies means peace. This victory meant peace for God’s people.

Christ’s victory means eternal peace for us.

God’s word announcing victory actually gives what it declares.

“Keep your feast, Judah”; they could keep festivals, such as Passover.  
 Because Christ has delivered us from Satan, death, and hell, we too are able to worship.  
 “Complete your vow.” The Israelites could live as God had directed them to live.  
 We now have the freedom and opportunity to live as God would have us live.  
 At the last day God will bring judgment on Satan and on all evil (unbelieving) people.  
 If the ungodly are not judged in this life, they will most assuredly be in the life to come.  
 Nahum made precise predictions about the future fall of Nineveh; it was certain.  
 We can be certain that Christ is coming again to judge the world (2 Peter 3:4-7).  
 Jesus Christ has won the victory; our peace will endure forever.

### **THANKSGIVING: HABAKKUK 3:17-19**

#### I WILL REJOICE IN GOD MY SAVIOR

If there had been a stock exchange in Old Testament Israel, much of it would have had to do with the agricultural products mentioned in our text.

So, speaking of economics, how'd you do this year?

How are things going for you on the political scene?

How has your year been otherwise?

Are these things which we can expect from God, if he truly loves us?

Or if we don't have these, is this an act of judgment upon us by God?

Or should we rather look upon a lack of these things as a test of faith?

God's love is to be found in what he has done for our salvation.

Jesus defined such love for us (John 15:13-15).

Worldly things come and go; death is the only constant, and death ruins everything.

But there is a death which, though constant, repairs all the ruin caused by death.

Christ's death means God's love is constantly present with us.

How weak and helpless we feel, when worldly goods come and go.

But Habakkuk sees an eternal source of strength. “The Lord is . . . my strength.”

No matter how well you have it in this life, death will undermine it all.

But the Lord brings security, like a deer on high places.

Wealth and health and the other things of this world do not even satisfy; Christ does.

Earthly riches give no joy. There is joy, however, in the Christ who gives eternal life.

If we look to the death of Jesus on the cross, we will find strength, security, and joy.

And so we can do no better than to repeat the words of the prophet: “Though the fig ...”





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