

POSSIBLE Prayer of the Church 🕊 7th Sunday after Trinity July 19th, 2026

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. [Possible brief silence]

Father, You have adopted us as Your children. You have compassion on us in Christ Jesus, who has won for us the gift of eternal life. Forgive our sins and give us Your Holy Spirit, that being made holy through our Baptism into Christ, we may present ourselves as servants of righteousness leading to sanctification and its end, eternal life. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

O Lord, pour out the blessing of Your Holy Spirit on the pastors and leaders of our ELS Synod. Give wisdom to those who propose, deliberate and decide for the work and welfare of our Synod. Give us courage to do with integrity what we promise. Bless our plans and actions, and grant success in Your good and gracious Will. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Lord and giver of life, You formed us from the dust of the earth and breathed into us Your own breath of life. All people are made in Your image and have dignity and worth in Your sight. Defend Your gift of earthly life at every age, from natural conception to natural death. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Almighty God, preserve the state and its servants. To all whom You have given authority, bestow also the wisdom needed to use it dutifully for the benefit of those under that authority. Turn us from every evil in judgment, law or action, and renew in us and our fellow citizens discernment and selflessness. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Father, Your Heavenly care extends to all Your children, especially those in the depths of need. Be with all those suffering in mind, body and soul. *[Look in kindness especially upon **Faith & Our Savior Prayers**] ... and all those we each name and keep in our hearts in personal prayer.* Let them find sustaining food for body and soul and such healing as Your gracious will provides. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

God of grace, as Your Son miraculously fed thousands in the wilderness, feed Your people gathered here today with the true bread from Heaven, the body and blood of Christ, our Savior, that even in the wilderness of this world we may share in the eternal life of Paradise. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

O LORD, Heavenly Father, join our prayers and praises with those of Your servants of every time and place, and unite them in the ceaseless petitions of our great High Priest until He comes in power and great glory as victorious LORD of all. Through Him, with Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is Yours, almighty Father, forever and ever. **Amen.**

TRINITY-7 Genesis 2:7-17 & Mark 8:1-9 WHY TREE IN EDEN[?] 7.19.26 F.OS.

PRAYER *LORD Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior: You are the True Bread of Life. Let us always live with You, living continually from your miracles, not fearing for our needs, but believing in You. Let us receive Your gifts with joy and thanksgiving, and share them with generous hand to all the needy. **Amen.***

INTRO. BUT, WHY? **WHY** did God put the **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil** in the Garden of Eden? Did you ever wonder that? I think most every Christian has. If everything was good in beginning, why did God put in an opportunity for man to mess it all up? Couldn't a lot of trouble have been avoided if that tree wasn't there at all?

GOD'S NO DUMMY God certainly wasn't foolish or evil for doing this. Nor was He playing games or toying with us. Rather, this has to do with the very nature of why God made man and what it means for man to be in His image. For the other creatures, it was sufficient that they lived according to instinct, simply by virtue of the way they were made. But the **LORD created man higher than the animals.** He created us to have **a special relationship with Him.** He is the God Who is love, and Who desires us to receive that love and return that love freely. And in order for love to be truly given and received, there also has to be the opportunity for that love to be rejected.

SHOWING REAL LOVE And so the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was there in the Garden that there might be **the opportunity for such real love.** Refraining from eating its fruit was one of the key ways Adam and Eve showed love for God and honored Him as their Maker. Our first parents knew only good. God alone knew how His goodness could be corrupted and turned against Him for evil. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then, was the place reserved for God alone, where they would worship Him.

AS LUTHER SAID, ... **Martin Luther** said, *"This tree ... was Adam's church, altar, and pulpit. Here he was to yield to God the obedience he owed, give recognition to the Word and will of God, give thanks to God, and call upon God."* And again, *"This tree of the knowledge of good and evil ... would have been the church at which Adam, together with his descendants, would have gathered on the Sabbath day"* [**Luther's Works AE 1:95,105**]. So then, one point we should understand clearly is that this tree was not some evil thing meant to trip up human beings. To be sure, there was a curse attached to its misuse – just as there are consequences to the misuse of any good thing. But above all, it was a place of worship, of hearing and honoring God's Word, and of praising Him for His great goodness to them.

BE [VERY] CAREFUL Beware, then, when you are tempted to use your human reason and thinking to question why God did things the way He did, **as if our limited understanding could critique the depths** of the mind of God, as if we were over Him in a position to judge Him. For whoever does so is engaging in the same sin that Adam and Eve did - putting themselves on the throne as judge of good and evil, **trying to be god in place of God.** Is it not utter foolishness to use our intelligence and mental faculties against the very God who gave them to us?

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED Of course, in one form or another that's exactly what has happened. We're often tempted to think like fools that we know better than God. And so we find ourselves **under the curse God pronounced**, *"In the day you eat of it you shall surely die ... Dust you are, and to dust you shall return."* The free will that man had in the beginning has been lost, just as the image of God has also been lost and polluted in us. No longer are we free in spiritual matters; rather we are in bondage to corruption, by nature enemies of God. **Ephesians 2** says that we are dead in our sin. We're spiritually stillborn. **And dead people don't make choices or exercise free will.** We can't do anything to bring ourselves to God or to get right with Him.

FREE [UNDESERVED] GIFT However, the God who is love did not leave us to perish forever in our fallen state. Our **[Romans]** Epistle reminds us, *"but the FREE gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* God's love is all about the giving of His free, undeserved gifts to us. And that was shown most fully and perfectly in the giving of Himself to us in the Incarnation of Jesus.

WILDERNESS vs. EDEN[?]
What a **contrast the setting of today's Gospel reading is to Eden**. Things have gone from a lush garden to a barren wilderness, from an abundance of food to the rumbling of empty stomachs. But notice that Jesus is right there in the wilderness with the people, enduring all of the effects of sin's curse right along with them. Jesus said, *"I have compassion on the multitudes."* **His heart goes out to us in our need.** Jesus entered into the bleakness and the harshness of this world in order that He might undo the curse and restore you to paradise. He went so far as to **make your problems His problems**. He knows what you're going through, not just from a distance, but first-hand. In His great mercy Jesus came into the world to suffer **with** you and to suffer **for** you in order to **take your suffering away forever**. He made Himself a part of your blood, sweat and tears in order to redeem your bodies and souls and renew the fallen creation in which you live.

'REVERSE' THE CURSE You can begin to see that taking place already in this miracle of the feeding of the 4000. Remember, the curse on Adam had been, *"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread."* But here the **Second Adam, Jesus, reverses the curse** and produces bread in abundance apart from any sweaty or tiring labor. In this moment He restores the bounty of the Garden of Eden, where food is received in overflowing measure from the gracious hand of God. Here you see God the Son beginning to break the curse of decay and death and overcome the fall into sin. You see a small glimpse of how it was in the beginning and how it will be even more so in the New Creation of The Age to come.

CURSE UNDONE[ON CROSS] Jesus would **complete His work of undoing the fall and breaking the power of the curse on the Cross**. The wages of sin is death; and so Jesus took those wages you had coming and died your death for you. Sin's deathly curse was broken and undone in the body of Christ the crucified. And therefore, because of Jesus' sacrifice, the gift of life now flows to you and to all who believe in Him. For if sin has been undone, so also are the wages of sin undone. Death and hell have been taken away from you through the cross. You have been released to a new life, free and full, through the resurrection of Jesus.

[3 DAY] JOURNEY Jesus had led these people **on a three day journey into the wilderness** to teach them. So also Jesus leads you on a journey into the wilderness, into **your daily callings in this desert world**, so that you may be taught of your desperate need for His help, so that you may learn to hunger for His Word and His righteousness.

SOUND FAMILIAR[?] Jesus took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to His disciples to set before the people. [Sound familiar?] In the same way still today, Jesus speaks His **Words of thanks and Consecration**, and His ministers distribute the blessed **Sacrament of the Altar**. The seven loaves were multiplied to feed and fully satisfy 4000 people. In the same way still today, Jesus uses seemingly insufficient bread to multiply His grace and feed and fully satisfy the church with His very life-giving body. Jesus said, *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."* And in wine He gives His cleansing blood for your forgiveness, that all those who believe in Him may never thirst.

SO IT IS W/ THE LORD When all had eaten there was more left over than when they started. Seven small loaves became seven large baskets. So it is with the LORD. The more He gives, the more He has yet to give. His mercy toward you cannot be exhausted. **His gifts don't run out.** There's always more; there's always better. The seven loaves stand for the seven days of creation. The seven large baskets stand for the even greater creation to come at Christ's Return. Not only is the LORD restoring you to the deathless perfection of Eden, He is exalting you to a status and a state even greater and better than Adam and Eve. The place being prepared for you in Heaven far surpasses even the Paradise of Eden. By sharing fully in your humanity, Christ has lifted you up to the very throne and glory of God.

IS/WAS IT WORTH IT[?] So, you may sometimes wonder whether or not God's creation of man **was worth it**, with all that has gone so terribly wrong since the fall, with all that God knew He would have to do to save and restore us. But that's not for us to dwell on. What we should dwell on is that from God's perspective, **you ARE worth it**, worth the price He would have to pay to have you in His love forever.

YOU ARE WORTH IT Baptized into Christ, believing in Him, you are restored to the image of God. You are given the mind and the will of Christ to battle against your stubborn old Adam. You are turned by the Holy Spirit from self-love to the love of God, who has given and done all for you. Though you must do battle with the devil and your own flesh until the grave, you are now given to come into God's presence to eat again. There is here for **you another tree, the Tree of Life = the Cross**. Because of it you'll never die, never separated from God anymore.

COME TO THE SACRAMENT As you receive this Living Bread that came down from Heaven, you are being given a taste of Paradise. Because **Heaven is where Christ is, and Christ is here for you**. *"The poor shall eat and be satisfied. For the Lord fills the hungry soul with goodness."* [Introit] **IJ'N, Amen.**

"O, Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever."