5 PRAY THE **PRAYER OF THE WEEK**

Absolve, we implore You, O Lord, Your people from their offenses, that from the bonds of our sins which by reason of our frailty we have brought upon us we may be delivered by Your bountiful goodness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Then pray for ourselves and others, and close with Luther's morning or evening prayer.

Morning

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Evening

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

6 SING OR SAY THE **HYMN OF THE WEEK** *TLH 609 · LSB 516*

Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying (Philipp Nicolai)

1. "Wake, awake, for night is flying,"
The watchmen on the heights are crying;
"Awake, Jerusalem, arise!"
Midnight hears the welcome voices
And at the thrilling cry rejoices:
"Oh, where are ye, ye virgins wise?
The Bridegroom comes, awake!
Your lamps with gladness take!
Hallelujah!
With bridal care Yourselves prepare
To meet the Bridegroom, who is near."

3. Now let all the heav'ns adore Thee,
Let men and angels sing before Thee,
With harp and cymbal's clearest tone.
Of one pearl each shining portal,
Where, dwelling with the choir immortal,
We gather round Thy radiant throne.
No vision ever brought,
No ear hath ever caught,
Such great glory;
Therefore will we Eternally
Sing hymns of praise and joy to Thee.

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Around the Word Devotions

The Last Sunday of the Church Year

THEME OF THE WEEK

The Second Coming of Christ

The second coming of Christ brings up many questions. We ask: When? How? Where? All these questions that rack our brains would be better left unanswered until that actual day that He returns. For what do these matter? And how many days can we add to our life worrying about them? Instead, let us fill our hearts with the promises of what we have in Christ, even right now. For the gifts of eternal life and salvation are ours right here and now, even as we wait for them in full. We shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, for Christ is the Lamb of God Who takes away our sin and brings us into His heavenly wedding feast as our perfect Bridegroom.

1 BLESS YOURSELF WITH THE **HOLY CROSS AND SAY:**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

2 PRAY THE **PSALM OF THE WEEK**

Isaiah 35:10; Psalm 39:4–5, 7–8

The ransomed of the Lord / shall return,*
and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy / on their heads.
They shall obtain joy and / gladness,*
and sorrow and sighing shall / flee away.
Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure / of my days,*
that I may know how / frail I am.
You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing be- / fore You;*
certainly every man at his best state is but / vapor.
And now, Lord, what do I / wait for?*
My hope / is in You.
Deliver me from all my trans- / gressions;*
do not make me the reproach of the / foolish.

Verse of the Week, Matthew 25:13: "Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

3 READ THE **SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION** *Sunday*

SUN **Matthew 25:1–13** *Faith is Readiness*

Five wise and five foolish virgins. With this parable Jesus calls us to be among the wise, among the ready, among those who have oil in their lamps. What does this mean? What does it mean to be ready for the Lord's return? How can we be prepared for the Last Judgment? Keeping all the commandments? Accomplishing enough good? That will never do. Our only hope is in Christ, His mercy, His forgiveness, His suffering and death for our life and salvation. Faith is readiness. We long for the last day because we know that the One coming is the One Who came already, the One Who loved us, and still loves us. The bridegroom comes, awake! Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Scripture continues on pages 2–3 · Steps 4–6: page 4

3 READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION *Monday–Thursday*

MON Psalm 103 *As Far as the East is from the West*

See in this Psalm how the Lord in His goodness has removed our sins from us "as far as the east is from the west" (v. 12). If you fly due north, for instance, you will eventually cross the North Pole and be going south and then north again, effectively in circles. But travel east or west and you are always going one exclusive direction. See how the East is as far from the West as two directions can possibly be from one another! "This all comes to pass in Christ, Who for this reason was promised and now is come, Whose kingdom reigns over all" (Luther), has removed our sins from us by His own blood. Father in heaven, as the east and the west can never meet, so remove our sins far from us, that they can be counted against us no more. Amen.

TUE 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 *The Day of the Lord*

The unbelieving world, marked in this passage by spiritual darkness, sleepiness, and drunkenness will continue to think that the world will keep going as it has been. "Peace and safety!" they cry, when there is no peace apart from faith and no safety apart from Jesus. They are heading for destruction as the great day of the Lord comes upon them unawares. But the Christians, those who eagerly await the Lord's coming, continue to encourage one another and build each other up in faith. They put on the sober virtues of faith, hope, and love so as to meet their Lord who died for them, whether they wake or sleep. There they have peace and safety. Lord Jesus, help us to put off the works of darkness and so meet You with joy when You come again. Amen.

WED Isaiah 65:17–19 *New Heavens and Earth*

These heavens and earth are tired, old, and worn out. Like with a frayed and threadbare garment, we can see the world groaning in anticipation of renewal. Nature has been despoiled. The waters are tainted. The air is poisoned. Society is in shambles. Men no longer fear God nor know how to love their neighbors. Everything is subjected to futility. God be praised that He has delivered this great promise to us today. He comes to create a new heavens and earth and the old ways of sin and death will not even be remembered. Weeping and sorrow will cease. The Lord's joy and gladness in and for us will give us eternal life. Christ is coming soon, dear saints. Pray he comes quickly. Grant me patience to wait for Your Son's coming, heavenly Father. Amen.

THU Matthew 5:13–16 *Hide It Under a Bushel*

As light we shine in the darkness. We do this so that others may see our good works and give glory to God. And this is important, for even though God doesn't need our good works, our neighbor does. But Jesus here, in this "salty-lightness" talk, doesn't just mean handing out sandwiches and shoveling your neighbor's sidewalk. These should be done, but they can just as easily be done by an unbeliever. (And if truth be told, sometimes they are even done better by unbelievers.) No, here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus wants us to be a light of the Gospel. The good works that will cause our neighbor to give glory to God are the preaching and teaching of Christ crucified and the forgiveness of sins. In this proclamation, the whole world may rejoice. Father, may we always be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Amen.

Next: Friday–Saturday and step 4, page 3

3 READ THE SCRIPTURE AND DEVOTION *Friday–Saturday*

FRI Revelation 21:1–7 *Behold, I Am Making All Things New*

The dwelling place of God is indeed with man through the incarnation of Christ, the Son of God, Who came to take away the sin of the world. Since that time of His first coming, Jesus has remained with us whenever we hear His Word or receive His Sacraments. We can't see Him, but He is personally and fully present. When the last day comes, our eyes will catch up with our ears and hearts. We will see what we have long believed and hoped for. Don't be afraid. Don't fear the judgment. You have already passed from death to life in Baptism. Your name has been recorded in the Book of Life. You have been prepared together with the whole church to be the pure and beautiful Bride of Christ. Grant me to always wait for Your coming, O Lord. Amen.

SAT Psalm 27 *Wait*

David, speaking in the Holy Spirit, encourages the soul to "wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!" (vs. 14 NKJV). He is doubly emphatic – wait! He says this specifically because of our tendency to NOT wait and trust that the Lord will deliver on His promises. He says "He WILL strengthen your heart" which means that right now, his heart needs strengthening. This psalm is not pious self-talk or bravado "My heart will not fear…" but is godly encouragement to those who suffer the effects of sin in this life. It points us not to ourselves but to the Lord Who is mighty to save. For those who pray thus in faith, the Lord WILL strengthen him by His Spirit. Lord, strengthen me by Your Word. Amen.

4 PRAY THE COMMANDMENTS, CREED, LORD'S PRAYER

The Ten Commandments

1. You shall have no other gods.
2. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
3. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not murder.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maid servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Next: steps 5–6, page 4