Possible Prayer of Church for 2nd-Last Sunday of Trinity November 15th

Let us bring our petitions and prayers before the throne of God our Father for the needs of the Church, the world and all people.

Awake, O LORD, and heal the wounds of Your people. Strengthen those You have redeemed, that they may lead worthy and fruitful lives in Your kingdom. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

LORD of the churches, You promise to tend Your congregations like lampstands around Your altar. Illumine them by Your Holy Spirit to show forth Your Gospel in the present darkness. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, by Your Word and promise You have made us Your people. Give to Your Church faithful pastors who preach the whole counsel of Your Word. Bless our [new] Synod president Dr. Michael; our circuit visitor Pr. Steven; and all who serve in the Office of the Holy Ministry, that they may proclaim the saving Gospel with boldness and joy. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

LORD God, You give us the gift of each other. Renew our fellowship as the Body of Christ. Grant all things beneficial for husbands and wives, the single, those who desire marriage, and the lonely who yearn to know the comfort of friends and family. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

King of kings, raise up godly and humble rulers in our land. Teach Your people to honor them while reserving all fear for Your Christ, who has made us and accomplished our redemption. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

Father in Heaven, remember in kindness all who cry out to You in affliction *[especially **Our Savior** & **Faith Prayers**] … and all those we each name in our hearts in personal [silent] prayer*. Grant that they would rejoice in Your faithfulness and await deliverance from their suffering with patience. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, grant us such trust in Your divine Word that we would acknowledge Your Son's true body and blood in His Supper and receive them in a worthy manner. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious LORD, we know that neither life nor death can separate us from Your love in Christ Jesus, our Lord. We thank You for all who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and we ask You to grant us also our inheritance with the saints in light. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. **Amen.**

TRINITY-2ND-LAST Matthew 25:31-46 *SORTING:* ***SHEEP*** *&* ***GOATS*** **11.15.26 F.OS.L**

SOONER THAN LATER *''He comes to judge the living and the dead.*" Judgment Day. **It's not far off. Nearer now than it was a week ago.** *How near?* We don't know, and He's not telling. What will it be like, this Day of Judgment? **Hear the Parable of the sheep and the goats.**

LAST WORD RE: THE LAST **This is Jesus' Last Parable**, **His Last Word** about last things before He dies and rises. He looks ahead to His coming in glory, when He will as the Son of Man in all His glory, and all His angels are with Him, and He sits on His throne to judge. His coming at the end of the age will be like a shepherd and his flock at the close of the day. All through the day, sheep and goats graze together as one flock under one shepherd interchangeably. Jesus is Lord of all and shepherd of all. Only at the end of the day are they separated into their respective pens. The sheep go to the pen on the shepherd's right, the goats to the pen on his left.

GOOD & BAD Judgment is **a sorting** and **a separation**. The basis for the shepherd's sorting is not what they did but what they are: sheep and goats. Not good and bad sheep. Not pious and unpious goats. **Just sheep and goats.**

RIGHTEOUS The sheep are identified as the "**righteous," the justified, those declared righteous for Jesus' sake**. The goats are those who **refuse to be** justified, who reject the gift in favor of their own works, which come up woefully short in the end. Works can't turn goats into sheep any more than they can make saints out of sinners. Only God can do that. *"By grace are you saved through faith, and this is **not** of yourselves; it is a gift of God, **not** by works."* By His justifying and saving Word, God calls the sinner a saint in Christ, the goat is declared to be a sheep in the Lamb Who takes away the sin of the world.

PRE- vs. POST- SORT **Only AFTER they are sorted and separated** is there any talk of works. Our works will be judged, this is true. But we will not be judged by our works, but only by the work of Jesus - His perfect life, His perfect death. The sheep on the right receive a blessing. They are *"blessed by the Father."* They have **an inheritance, a Kingdom** prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. **That's** "**Christ-Talk**." When you talk about anything "before the beginning," it must be in Christ. Christ is the One who was before the foundation of the world, and in Him are found all His sheep.

HIDDEN Their works are praised and a **deep mystery is revealed**. **Something hidden that you would not have known, unless it was revealed to you**. The Shepherd King was hidden in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the one needing clothing, the sick one, the one in prison. Who would have known? The sheep had no idea; they are astonished. They say, *"When, LORD? What did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or in need of clothing or sick or imprisoned? When did we do these things for you?"* They just did them because they needed to be done.

OH, TO BE [A] KING We don't normally look for God **in the least,** do we? We may look down on them. We may even look **away from them**. But we hardly recognize them as an icon of Jesus in His humility. And we certainly don't want to see ourselves in that light. Who among you wants to be regarded as "least"? Certainly not old Adam. He wants to be **the greatest, the one in**

charge. He would have nothing to do with the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, imprisoned, sick, with the least, the lost, the losers.

HE'S THE ONE Jesus, quite intentionally I think, is describing ***Himself*** in His own **crucified humility**. He was **hungry** with **our** hunger, **thirsty** with **our** thirst, **naked** with **our** shame, **imprisoned** under the Law, **sick** with ***our sin***. He was **all those things,** and it wasn't a pretty sight. *"No beauty that we should desire Him,"* **Isaiah** said of the "Suffering Servant." If you're looking for glory on our terms, you wouldn't look or find it here.

GOD'S [*GOOD*] WILL On the **left are the goats**. They have no inheritance but **a dismissal**. **"Depart from me."** They aren't blessed but **cursed**. **Not** by the Father, please note, **simply cursed**. The Father curses **no one**. They are dismissed to an eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Hell is intended only for the **devil** and his **fallen angels**. **Not you, me, or any human being in this world**. God's Will is that **ALL be saved** in Jesus, and come to the knowledge of that truth. Jesus is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. If anyone is cursed, if anyone winds up in eternal fire, it will be **entirely AGAINST God's good and gracious will to save**.

[THEY] DID *NOTHING* Their sin was one of **omission**. **They did nothing**. They gave nothing to feed the hungry, nothing to quench the thirsty, nothing to clothe the naked, nothing for the stranger, nothing for the sick and imprisoned. They did nothing because they did not recognize the King in the losers. "**When** did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked, a stranger, and did not help you?" Had they known it was the Lord, they would have done something. They are as ignorant of their sin as the sheep were of their good works. And when confronted with their sins of omission, they do the faithless thing - they ***try*** **to justify themselves**. *"We didn't know it was you."* **Exactly.**

THEY REJECTED [HIM] In rejecting the least and the lost, **they rejected their hidden LORD**. Their refusal to be **numbered with the losers** flowed out of their rejection of their Shepherd. They turned their back on every sign of His cross in the world. And in the end, their **rejection becomes their own condemnation**. They don't get what they DE*SERVE/D*, **they get what they DE*SIRE/D***. They wanted nothing to do with their Shepherd, and now they will live (/**suffer) without Him forever**. *"They will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."*

HOW ABOUT *YOU?!* So then, **Which are you?** Sheep or a goat? At the end of the **Parable**, at **the end of the day**, at the end of **your life**, at the end **of Time…** which one are you? Are you a **sheep** of the Good Shepherd's flock, blessed by His Father, with an eternal inheritance? Or are you a **goat**, cursed by your own refusal to be justified, cursed to an eternal punishment in eternal fire intended only for fallen angels?

WE'RE *BOTH* ACTUALLY ***"Simul justus et peccator,"*** Martin Luther observed of our condition under the Word. ***"At once righteous and a sinner."*** Simultaneously sheep and goat. That's the mystery of our existence under the Word that is at once Law and Gospel. Don't get fooled into either/or thinking. In this life, it's always **both/and**.

LOOK IN **LAW** MIRROR If you look into the mirror of the Law, you will see the face of a goat staring back at you. You will see all your denials and rejections of the least - the unfed hungry, the unquenched thirsty, the unclothed naked, the unwelcomed stranger, the sick or imprisoned that you did not visit and comfort. If you look to the Law for comfort in God's judgment, you won't find any. We are all natural born goats. Sinners. Children of Adam and Eve. Rebels against our Shepherd and King. If not for Jesus, God's Lamb, we would all hear a divine ***"Depart from me."*** Apart from Jesus, there is only eternal punishment, eternal fire, eternal regret at opportunities overlooked and lost.

[DON'T] LOOK IN MIRROR But there is another way to see yourself. Not in the mirror of the Law **but in Christ**. He is your life. In Adam, you are dead and doomed as the goats in the Parable. But in Christ you are **alive to God**, people of His pasture, sheep of His hand. Embraced in the death of the Shepherd, goats are declared sheep in the eyes of God. Don't look to your works. Your works will bring you no comfort, no assurance. The good in your good works is not even apparent to you. Look to Jesus Christ. He will tell you who you are.

LOOK [BACK] TO BAPTISM Look to all those concrete, tangible places where Christ locates Himself for you. Look to **your Baptism**. That's your identity in Christ**. In Adam**, you're **100% goat** on the left. But **in Christ, you are 100% sheep on the right.** Embraced in the death of the Lamb, goats are sheep in the eyes of the Shepherd, cleansed of their sins, united with Him who takes away their sins in His death.

LOOK TO WORD Look to the **Word of Forgiveness**. Forgiveness received is the difference between a sheep and a goat. Be forgiven and free in Christ. Learn what it means to live in the freedom of that forgiveness, trusting Jesus and His work and not yourself and your works.

LOOK TO SUPPER Look to the **LORD's Supper**, Christ's **Body** and **Blood** given and shed for you. The Shepherd feeds His sheep with His own death and life. He prepares a table for you in the presence of your enemies. Your cup **runs over** in the abundance of Jesus' life poured out for you.

SPOTLESS… He satisfies your hunger and thirst for righteousness. He clothes you with **HIS perfection, a seamless, spotless robe of white.** He welcomes you to His Father's House and to His Table, not as a stranger but as friend and family, **an heir,** actually. He visits you in the prison house of sin and death to set you free. He comes as the Divine Physician to heal you. He comes the **perfect Sheep**, the **unblemished Lamb** once **slain for all**.

IN COGNITO And in Christ, look to the least and lowly and lost around you. They are Christ *incognito* for you to serve. S/he is that **poor beggar**, the **orphaned child**, the **friendless stranger**, the **dying woman**, the **imprisoned man**. He is all of us in the brokenness and lost-ness of our humanity. *"As often as you've done it for the least of these brothers of Mine, you've done it to Me."*

DO IT *BECAUSE* [You] **Don't** do these things **TO be** saved. That would be the way of the goats. [We] Do it ***because*** *you* ***ARE saved***. That's way of the sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd and who follow Him through death to life. Let us then **pray daily** for our Lord's return. Let us look for His coming.

COME [QUICKLY] JESUS Our LORD says in Revelation [22:20], *"Surely I am coming quickly."* We say with all the saints who have gone before us, *"**Amen**. **Even so**, **Come**, **LORD Jesus**! **And**, **Come Quickly**!" **IJ'N**, **Amen**. **SDG***