



in all things

2021-22 Chapel Talks
for Lutheran Schools

Colossians 1:15-20

by Rev.
Bob Riggert





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About the Author

The Rev. Bob Riggert has been blessed to do several things to serve in the context of Lutheran schools: teacher, principal, pastor, district education executive, and author of previous Chapel Talks and other writings for the church and Lutheran school ministry.

In his retirement, he is about the things of family: husband to Diane; father to Jenni, Jodi, Jon and Julie; and grandfather to 13 grandchildren. He enjoys being about the things of the community of Manning, Iowa, and traveling to see the things of God's creation.

It is his prayer that Chapel Talks would continue to share and celebrate Christ IN ALL THINGS in Lutheran school worship and all other activities.





HOLY CROSS
CRUSADERS

The Theme

“IN ALL THINGS is a reminder that the Christian story encompasses all things. Nothing, and no one, is left out” (Peter H. Nafzger, “In All Things” 2022 Thematic Development for the LCMS Youth Gathering). Christ is all things to the apostle Paul and in his inspired writing to the church at Colossae. “(In four relatively short chapters, Paul uses the Greek word for ‘all’ 39 times.) Christ is the source of all life and the goal of **all** creation. He is the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer of **all** things” (Nafzger, Thematic Development). He is the goal of all life and of all creation. In the six verses of the theme text, Paul refers to Christ (He/Him) 13 times. The “all” of Christ and His work is mentioned seven times. Christ is ALL things!

LCMS Youth Ministry and its partners have chosen to take the youth of the church into the Book of Colossians and especially Colossians 1:15-20, this rich section of Scripture, at the 2022 LCMS Youth Gathering. It is a blessing for other ages and stages of the church to join our youth in exploring the theme and the implication for the church and individual lives.

“In All Things” is a relevant theme for Lutheran schools. Lutheran schools are always about Christ and His cross. The history, settings and cultures of Lutheran schools are all unique. Lutheran schools are increasingly diverse in student and family demographics. Lutheran schools welcome students of various religious backgrounds and even those with no prior contact with Christ. Lutheran schools bring the Good news of Jesus to every student in all things.

A variety of activities take place in Lutheran schools. Preschools and early childhood centers engage in playtimes and introductory songs and stories. Elementary schools have their classroom routines and a variety of experiences from athletics to the arts. Lutheran high schools take students more deeply into curriculum areas and more intensely into extracurricular activities. Whatever the setting or activity, Christ is in all things. The theme takes the message of Colossians 1:15-20 beyond the chapel time or Sunday worship to every aspect of Lutheran school ministry and activity.

Lutheran school pastors and administrators are encouraged to celebrate the theme beyond the chapel times. Staff and family Bible studies on the Book of Colossians are encouraged. “The Mighty and the Mysterious: A Study of Colossians” (Heidi Goehmann, Concordia Publishing House, 2019) is an excellent and thorough resource for individual or group study. The Concordia Publishing House commentary series includes a detailed explanation of Colossians.

“In All Things” is a confession of Christ’s redemptive work. It is a celebration of the Christ for youth, children and adults of the church; it is an opportunity for Lutheran schools to worship Christ in all things.



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Using Chapel Talks

“Christ is all, and in all” (COL. 3:11).

“In All Things” brings the message of Colossians 1:15–20 and all of Scripture to the school chapel time and subsequently to every context of the Lutheran school setting. While Christ is the message of all of Scripture, He is the intense focus of the Gospels. The weekly chapel messages are primarily based on the weekly Gospel lessons of the Church Year. In keeping with the worship practice of many Lutheran congregations, Series B is the focus of messages from August through November of 2021. Series C is the guide for the 2022 chapel outlines. The Advent season includes a series based on Old Testament prophets and their message of Christ’s coming. The Lenten season includes a series on the Colossians 1:15–20 text.

The weekly chapels include a theme often using the words “All” or “Things” in keeping with the school year theme. The “Scripture reading” is typically the appointed Gospel lesson for the Sunday in the Church Year. The “text” focuses on a verse(s) from the Scripture reading that highlights the theme. A song selection supports the theme or season. Songs have been chosen from *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*, *Lutheran Worship (LW)*, *All God’s People Sing (AGPS)* and from the new *One and All Rejoice (OAR)*.

“First Things” provides an introductory thought or activity that connects the children to the week’s theme. “The Main Thing” shares Law and Gospel exploration of the text and, most importantly, brings Christ and His redemptive work to the students. “All Things in Jesus’ Name” offers a petition relevant to the theme. “More Things” provides opportunities for the pastor, teachers and parents to continue exploration and explanation of the theme beyond the chapel setting. Chapel leaders are encouraged to more deeply study the text and expand on the outline in ways fitting to their school worship context. “More Things” often includes a catechism study suggestion. Leaders and worshipers are encouraged to use the 2017 Concordia Publishing House edition of *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*.

Children welcome liturgical structure in their worship. The extent and format of that structure may be determined by customs and preferences of the school and congregation. Some settings prefer the chapel talk in the context of a Divine Service. Others may use a more informal worship style developed by the local pastors or from other sources.

Chapel Talks were written visualizing an assembly of elementary students. The weekly messages may be adapted or expanded for younger or older students.

The “In All Things” theme invites a worship response beyond the sanctuary and school student body. Lutheran schools may want to emphasize the text and theme of the week in daily staff and student devotions. Families, congregation members and friends may be invited to worship with children and continue to emphasize and live the theme in the church and home.

May God bless Lutheran schools in their worship and celebration of Christ – in all things!



hymn

In All Things Jesus Christ Is Found

BY JEFFREY E. BURKART

Based on Colossians 1:15-20 and the 2021-2022 National Lutheran Schools Week Theme: "In All Things"
Sung to WAS GOTT TUD ("What God Ordains Is Always Good" – LSB 760). Tune: Public domain.

In all things Jesus Christ is found;
The first born of creation.
Of everything that was and is
He is our one foundation
His grace is found and did resound
In heav'nly proclamation
At Jesus' incarnation.

This fallen world was first called good;
Formed in God's own perfection.
In Adam's fall this world was spoiled
And trapped in sin's subjection.
Then to this world Christ was unfurled
When He, King of Creation,
Brought grace to every nation.

The Sovereign Lord of heav'n and earth
Has won for us salvation.
From Bethlehem, in lowly birth,
God's reconciliation
Began, so we would be set free
From death and condemnation,
To lives of jubilation!

Our Master came to save and serve;
His wayward sheep to cherish.
Christ, from His task, did never wane
That we might never perish.
There is no one, save God's own Son,
Who could redeem creation
And grant to us salvation.

△ O Father, Spirit, Son on high,
Give us the strength to serve You
As we, in our Baptismal grace,
Shout: "Christ has made all things new!"
Praise God, whose grace in every place,
Has shown His glory to us
And ever shall renew us!

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Scripture References

Colossians 1:15-17

Ephesians 2:19-22

Psalms 19:1-4; Luke 2:8-14

John 1:14

Genesis 1

Romans 5:19

John 1:1-5

Matthew 2:1-12

1 Timothy 6:12-16

Acts 4:11-12

Luke 2:8-20

Colossians 1:19-20; 2 Corinthians 5:19

John 5:24

Psalms 68:3-4

Luke 19:10

John 10:14-20; Psalms 23

John 14:6

2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Psalms 89:14-15

Colossians 3:1-4

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opening service

In All Things

First Things

Share a listing (or display) of school subjects and activities that may be part of the school year: textbooks, sports equipment, musical instruments, lunch tray, etc. The assortment should be appropriate to the age and grade level of the students. Also, include a Bible in the display.

We are looking forward to an exciting school year with many events and activities. I have assembled some of the “things” that will be part of our school year together. Some of these things will be part of our classroom learning. Some things will be used for other school activities.

The Main Thing

I have also included The Main Thing. (Show Bible.) God’s Word is part of everything we do in our school. This year, we will especially focus on God’s Word to us from one of the books that the apostle Paul was inspired to write. Paul wrote a letter to the church at Colossae. The book is called Colossians.

God used Paul to start several churches as he traveled as a missionary. Paul wrote letters to these churches. Christ was always the main message of Paul’s letters. “Christ” is mentioned almost 20 times in the Book of Colossians. In today’s lesson, Paul reminded the congregation that Christ created all things, that He rules over all things, that He reconciles all things. In our chapel services this year, we will learn about all the things Christ is and all the things Christ has done for us.

Sin is part of all things in our life. Whether we are at home, at school, with our friends, or even alone in our room or in our thoughts, our sinful nature is part of who we are. We enter our classrooms as sinners. Every school team or group is an assembly of sinners. Our sin separates us from God. God’s Word tells us about God’s promise of a Savior and Jesus’ suffering and death for sinners. Jesus’ work has “reconciled” us to God. Because Jesus shed His blood for us on the cross, our sins are forgiven and we again have a relationship with God.

That’s God’s Good News for us in the Bible. That’s the Good News we will hear in our chapel services and Sunday worship. That’s the Good News that we will hear every day during the school year. That Good News means that Christ is “In All Things” this school year.

scripture

Colossians 1:15–20

text

“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (COL. 1:19–20).

songs

“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” (LSB 549, AGPS 56);
“All Creatures of Our God and King” (OAR 334)

The Bible brings The Main Thing of Jesus to us not only in our school chapel time, but also in our classroom devotions and our Sunday worship. We look forward to learning about and living The Main Thing of Jesus this school year.

All Things in Jesus’ Name

Heavenly Father, we look forward to all the things that have been planned for this school year. Thank You for blessing the preparations of pastors, administrators, teachers, parents and others. Bless all things that happen in every classroom and every school activity. Thank You for the opportunities that we will have to worship You. Grant that “In All Things” You are glorified. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Make the “In All Things” theme visible in school and church bulletin boards and other displays.
- ★ Review the importance of the “Invocation” as our baptismal beginning to all things.
- ★ Catechism study: Refer to the First Commandment, emphasizing that God is first and only “In All Things.”

week 1: propers 15

All Satisfying

First Things

Display a chart of the basic food groups (or set up a display of the groups: fruits, vegetables, proteins, etc.)

Your parents and our school lunch program planners want to make sure that you eat a healthy and balanced menu of food each day. The right foods in the right amounts keep us healthy. We thank God for all the things that He provides to keep the bodies that He created healthy.

Today's Bible reading describes an even more important food. Jesus tells His disciples and us about the food that keeps us spiritually healthy.

The Main Thing

Earlier in John 6, we read about one of Jesus' miracles. Using the five loaves and two fish from a boy's lunch, Jesus fed 5,000 people. Many people were excited about Jesus' miracle, and they hoped that He would do many other miracles to provide food and other things for His followers.

Jesus teaches that there is something even more important and satisfying than food for our earthy life. Jesus teaches about the food that brings eternal life. No matter how healthy and balanced our meals might be, we still get hungry and sometimes we get ill. There is no food that satisfies all of our needs all the time. There is no food that prevents us from dying. God's Word tells us that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). While it is important to eat healthy food, our bodies still may get sick. We will still get older. We will still die.

Jesus describes Himself as food, saying, "I am the bread of life." Jesus came to not only perform miracles of healing and helping. He came to be the miracle of salvation. Jesus went to the cross to suffer and die for our sins. Believing in Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we are given the promise of eternal life. Jesus promises that by believing in Him, we will live with Him forever.

While the food groups are very helpful, they are incomplete. Today's lesson teaches that it is important to add another "food" to the group. We add Jesus, the Bread of Life. The "food" of Jesus gives us eternal life. The Bread of Life is satisfying always and in all things.

We thank God for the foods that we will enjoy this school year: lunches, snacks, classroom pizza parties

scripture

John 6:51–69

text

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever" (JOHN 6:51).

songs

"O Living Bread from Heaven" (LSB 642); "Alleluia! Sing to Jesus" (AGPS 60); "Bread of Heaven" (OAR 257)

and other items that we will eat. We thank God for giving us the most important food of all, the Living Bread of Jesus.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we thank You for providing food that satisfies our physical hunger. We pray that You would provide physical food for the hungry people in our community and around the world. Thank You for giving us Jesus, the Bread of Life. There are many people who have not heard about or been satisfied by the Bread of Life. Bless the pastors, teachers and missionaries who share this heavenly food. In all things, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: Review the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer.
- ★ Collect food items for a local food pantry.

week 2: proper 16

The Main Thing

First Things

Blindfold a student and give verbal directions toward an object or destination. Coach them toward the destination using the commands “cold” (if they are wandering away from the goal) and “hot” (if they are getting near the goal). Students may want to assist with the coaching.

Perhaps you, too, have played this game at a party or with friends. The goal is to listen carefully to the “hot” and “cold” commands so that you reach the desired destination. Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees was no game. They had the wrong destination and were listening to the wrong directions. In God’s Word, we are given directions to the truth of Jesus.

The Main Thing

Through Moses, God had given many laws to Israel so that they might be faithful to Him and remember His promise to send their Savior. The Pharisees had taken those laws and even added to them (developing a list of over 600 directions). The Bible reading shares a few of those laws: how and when to wash one’s hands and the washing of cooking utensils. Our passages call their laws and traditions “the commandments of men.” By following all the laws, the Pharisees thought they could please God and earn their salvation.

By hearing Jesus’ teachings and seeing His miracles, the disciples were learning that the things of men or their good works could not make them worthy before God. It was only the work of Jesus that allowed His followers to be worthy before God. It was not the works of one’s hands but faith in the heart that brought salvation. Jesus did the work of our salvation. Jesus followed every command His Father had given. Jesus followed every divine direction all the way to the cross.

Today there are a lot of voices that try to give us directions. Many people try to direct us as to what is “hot” or “cold.” The directions may come from television, movies, the internet or other sources. Sometimes even friends

or family may guide us away from Jesus. Often times those directions lead us away from the goal of following Jesus.

We are blessed to hear God’s directions from His Word in our classrooms and in our worship. God’s Word tells us that by His death and resurrection, Jesus has fulfilled all the laws and promises of the Old Testament. In our Baptism, God opened our hearts to believe. As we continue to hear God’s Word, we will hear His directions for our lives. Believing in Him, we will be led to the final destination of heaven.

We hear lots of directions at school from pastor, principal, teachers, coaches, aides and others. We listen respectfully and carefully to those directions. However, we listen most attentively to God’s directions for us.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we confess that many times we are tempted to listen to voices that do not share the truth of Your Word. We thank You that You have placed the truth of salvation in our hearts. Bless us as we listen to Your Word and faithfully follow You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

scripture
Mark 7:1–13

text

“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (MARK 7:6B–7).

songs

“Come, Follow Me,” the Savior Spake” (LSB 688, AGPS 85);
“I Believe” (OAR 347)

More Things

- ✦ Catechism study: Review the Second Commandment and its meaning.
- ✦ Learn more about the church’s ministry to those who are physically blind.
- ✦ Share Psalm 119:105 and other passages that emphasize the importance of the directions of God’s Word.

week 3: propers 17

Things from Within

First Things

Develop and share a list of “evil things” that are age and setting appropriate: curse words, gossip, lies, R-rated movies, inappropriate websites, etc.

What do you notice about this listing? What makes you uncomfortable about this list? We might use words like “inappropriate,” “bad” or even “evil” to describe the list. In today’s Bible lesson, Jesus shares a listing of some evil thoughts and actions: “evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery...” (vv. 21–22). Jesus also teaches where evil comes from. The Good News is that Jesus defeated the evil one.

The Main Thing

God’s Word in Genesis 3 shares how evil came into the world. The devil is the evil one who came to tempt Adam and Eve. The devil still roams our world and tries to tempt us (1 PETER 5:8). While we should always be watchful for the devil’s temptations, Jesus warns of another source of evil: “All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

We may say things like “You are a good student” or give compliments like “good job.” However, the truth is that we are not “good.” We are all born sinful, and we do many sinful and evil things. We may lie to our parents, cheat on a test, think unkind things about our classmates, disrespect our teachers and many other things that do not please God. All of those thoughts and actions show that there is evil “within.”

King David knew that there was evil in his heart and he prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (PS. 51:10). Through the family of King David, God sent His perfect Son, Jesus. Jesus never had an evil thought or action. Jesus took all of our evil on Himself and made us clean by His sacrifice on the cross.

The evil within our hearts was washed away in our Baptism. In anticipation of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the baptismal candidate is asked, “Do you renounce the devil and all his work and all his ways?” The answer, “Yes, I renounce him,” is followed with the water and the Word, which guarantees forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. All that is evil is drowned with the evil one. In Christ, we are free to worship Him and live for Him in all things.

We continue to struggle with the evil within, but Jesus has cleansed us from evil, and the Holy Spirit dwells within us.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we confess the evil that is in us. We give You thanks that in the waters of Baptism, we have been washed of what is evil and given a clean heart. In all things, may we honor You with our lips and with all our being. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Catechism study: Review “What does such baptizing with water indicate” from the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.
- ✦ Visit the baptismal font; look for other baptismal symbols in the sanctuary.

scripture

Mark 7:14–23

text

“All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person” (MARK 7:23).

songs

“Create in Me” (LSB 956, OAR 366);
“Jesus in the Morning” (AGPS 143)

week 4: propers 18

All Things Well

First Things

Ask the question, “What do you do well?” Get the responses of several students/staff. The chapel leader may share things that he does well. The list may include an academic ability, an artistic gift, an athletic skill, a hobby or even a vocation. We thank God for the gifts and abilities that He has given us.

Can we do everything well? Obviously not! In today’s Bible reading it is said of Jesus, “He has done all things well.”

The Main Thing

In today’s lesson, Jesus performs another miracle. Jesus heals a man who could not hear and who could not speak clearly. The all-powerful Jesus simply says, “Be opened,” and the man could hear and speak. Once again, the disciples are astonished at the work of Jesus, and they observe, “He has done all things well.”

We cannot do everything well because we are human. Some things we do not do well because we have not been blessed with the gifts or abilities. Some things we do not do well because our sinful nature causes us to make mistakes.

Our God is perfect, and everything He does is perfect. Genesis 1 shares the creation story and after every day of creation, we read, “It was good.” When sin ruined God’s perfect creation, God had the perfect and only possible plan. He sent His only Son, Jesus, to fulfill every promise and complete every detail of His plan.

Jesus came to earth and did all things well. His miracles were evidence of His perfect power. Jesus perfectly fulfilled every promise and plan of His Father. As Jesus died on the cross, He spoke, “It is finished.” Every detail was perfectly accomplished so that all things would be well between God and us. The blessings of Jesus’ death and resurrection are fully ours through Baptism. As God looks at us in Christ, He declares, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (MATT. 25:21).

In everything we do, we try to do well as our response of praise and thanks to God. Whether it is our school work, our responsibilities at home or other places where we learn and serve, we know that we cannot do things perfectly, but we do them well in Jesus’ name.

scripture

Mark 7:31–37

text

“And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well’” (MARK 7:37).

song

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”
(LSB 790, AGPS 201, OAR 294)

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, You do all things well. We give You thanks for the perfect work of Jesus. Thank You for the gifts and abilities that You have given to us. Help us to use them in worship of You and in service to others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Catechism study: Review the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed to celebrate the work of the perfect and providing heavenly Father.
- ✦ What do you do well? Write a prayer of thanks for the gifts and blessings God has given you.

week 5: propers 19

Believing All Things Are Possible

First Things

Through the logo, book or examples, introduce the children to “Ripley’s Believe It or Not.”

For more than 100 years, “Ripley’s” has been part of our history. Mr. Ripley accumulated unusual illustrations and exhibits. (Perhaps some students have visited one of the museums.) Whether it is in a museum, book or from our own experiences, there are some things that are so unusual that they are hard to believe.

Today’s Gospel reading tells of another unbelievable miracle by Jesus.

The Main Thing

A father brings his son to Jesus to have him healed from an evil spirit that caused the boy to be unable to speak and hear. The boy’s father believed that Jesus could heal his son. The father’s request is granted. Jesus simply says, “Come out of him and never enter him again,” and the boy is healed.

Jesus performed miracles so people would know and believe that He was the Son of God and promised Messiah. As people heard Jesus’ teaching and saw Jesus’ miracles, the Holy Spirit worked faith in the lives of those who followed Jesus. Jesus promised that “all things are possible for one who believes.” For some who came to Jesus believing, the impossibility of healed bodies, the impossibility of freedom from evil spirits, and the impossibility of thousands of hungry people fed happened.

For us and all who believe in Jesus, the impossible also happens. For sinners to be forgiven of all their sins seemed impossible. For people to be in a relationship with God again seemed impossible. For people to spend an eternity with Jesus seemed impossible. Jesus made all that possible by going to the cross and suffering and dying for the sins of the whole world.

When Jesus’ dead body was taken from the cross and put in the grave, it seemed impossible that He would ever be alive again. But on Easter, the impossible happened and Jesus rose victoriously so that all who believe in Him would also rise with Him.

scripture

Mark 9:14–29

text

“All things are possible for one who believes” (MARK 9:23).

songs

“We All Believe in One True God” (LSB 953, OAR 353); “We Come to Praise You” (AGPS 254)

A Ripley’s book or museum may share some seemingly impossible things that may be true. However, God’s Word is always true and everything it tells about Jesus is not only possible, but it’s real for all who believe.

All Things in Jesus’ Name

Heavenly Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. When our salvation seemed impossible, You sent Your Son to do the impossible – to pay for my sins and the sins of the whole world. Through Your Spirit, help me to believe Your Word and to share Your possibilities with others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: We bring our seemingly impossible situations to God in prayer; review the Introduction and Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer.

week 6: propers 20

Last of All

First Things

Display or describe “first” slogans or items: “We’re #1”; first-place trophies, ribbons or banners; etc.

It’s fun to win. Our school has some trophies and banners from team victories. Some of you have gotten ribbons and awards when you have won competitions.

Have you ever seen any “last place” awards? Typically, last place is not emphasized or recognized.

In today’s Bible reading, Jesus teaches about being “last of all.”

Main Thing

Like us, Jesus’ disciples were sinful, imperfect human beings. Like us, they sometimes argued with each other. In today’s lesson, the argument was about who was the greatest. They probably weren’t arguing about who was the greatest fisherman, runner or any such competition. They probably wanted to know who was the greatest in God’s kingdom or who was Jesus’ best and favorite follower.

While our arguments might be about who is the best athlete, math student, speller or similar competition, we, too, can get caught up in thinking that we are better and more obedient followers of Jesus than others.

As true God, Jesus is certainly always first. Through Moses, God declared to Israel, “I am the Lord; there is no other.” Jesus was the first of creation and will be present through all eternity. Jesus was the first and only Son of the Father. Seated on His throne through all eternity, Jesus declares, “I am the first” (REV. 1:17).

Jesus, who was and is always first, also makes Himself “last.” Jesus chooses to come as a baby who is laid in a manger. Jesus said that He “had no place to lay His head.” The King of kings comes humbly into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Jesus chooses to be crucified with criminals. Jesus chose to be last so that we could be saved. Through Jesus, we who should be in last place in God’s kingdom are welcomed to be among His children. We are all #1 to Jesus.

It’s OK to try to be first. We certainly always want to give our best effort in the classroom, in sports and in all tasks. We try to get the best grades we can.

We realize that none of those things makes us right with God. Jesus has paid the price for our sins. Following His example, we seek to serve others rather than ourselves. We are ready to say, “You go first; I’ll be last.”

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, may we always honor You as the first and only God. We give You thanks that You sent Jesus who was willing to be last and to be the perfect sacrifice for our sin. Give us serving hearts so that we are willing to put others first. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Catechism study: We honor God as first in our worship; review the Third Commandment and explanation.
- ✦ Explore ways to put others first.

scripture

Mark 9:30–37

text

“If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (MARK 9:35).

songs

“May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill” (LSB 698); “This Is My Commandment” (AGPS 240, OAR 313)

week 7: propers 21

All of Me

First Things

Display several fractions on poster board or another writing surface: $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{7}{8}$, $\frac{11}{16}$.

We are going to do a quick mathematics review today. What do we call these numbers? (Fractions) A fraction is a part of something. We use fractions all the time. Three people may share a candy bar, and each gets $\frac{1}{3}$ of the bar. A cooking recipe may ask for $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt. It's important to understand fractions.

The Main Thing

Today's Bible reading teaches that in our relationship with God, we don't deal with fractions. Jesus requires our whole self.

Sin doesn't affect just part of us. It affects all of us. We confess our sinfulness. In our worship liturgy, we confess, "We have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed" (Divine Service, Setting Three). Our eyes see sinful things; our ears hear sinful things; our tongue says sinful things; our hands do sinful things; we walk to sinful places. We are to take sin and its effects seriously. Jesus' words in our Bible reading suggest getting rid of the sinful parts of our body. If we were to literally follow Jesus' words, we would all be walking around with missing body parts. We would be fractions.

All of Jesus came to earth in human flesh. Jesus had eyes, ears, hands and feet. All of Jesus went to the cross to die for our sins. He gave His whole being so that we would not have to cut off or poke out the sinful parts

of our being. Jesus' body took the punishment that we should have experienced.

The blessings of Jesus' sacrifice are ours in our Baptism. While the water of Baptism may be poured over just part of us (our head), the power of Baptism washes over every part of our being. Baptism washes away the sins of our eyes, ears, hands, feet, every inch of skin and every organ of our body.

In thanksgiving to God, we dedicate our whole being to serve Him. In the hymn "Take My Life and Let It Be," the hymn writer offers to God his hands, feet, voice, lips, mind and every part. We don't give God a fraction of ourselves. We give Him the whole.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we confess that every part of us is sinful. We rejoice that in the waters of Baptism You have cleansed every part of us. May we dedicate ourselves to serve You only and wholly. In Jesus' name, Amen.

scripture

Mark 9:38–50

text

"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. ... [If] your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. ... [If] your eye causes you to sin, tear it out" (MARK 9:43, 45, 47).

song

"Take My Life and Let It Be" (LSB 783, AGPS 223); "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" (OAR 200)

More Things

- ✦ Catechism study: Review the Fifth and Seventh Commandments.
- ✦ Explore how various parts of our being might be used to serve God: "I can use my voice to..." "I can use my eyes to..."

week 8: proper 22

All in the Family

First Things

Display family photos (photos of the presenter's family, school families or other family groups). Do you have any family photos? Perhaps they are from a special family gathering (vacation, Christmas, etc.). Perhaps your family has gathered for a more formal photo (church directory, etc.). Each of our family photos is different. Some families are small. Some families are large. Some families have several generations. Some families may have a single parent. Some families have biological parents and stepparents. We celebrate that God puts us into families.

Main Thing

Today's Bible reading teaches that families are special to Jesus. Jesus was part of a human family with an earthly mother and father. Most likely, Jesus also had step-brothers or stepsisters and cousins. God chose to send His Son into the world to be part of a family so that we all could be part of God's family.

Jesus teaches that a husband and wife are the heart of the family. Just as God created Adam and Eve for each other, so God brings male and female together to be the heart of the family. It is God's desire that husband and wife love each other and stay faithful to each other.

When a couple gets married, the order of worship (*LSB Agenda*, p. 65) states, "God also established marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise." God blesses the husband and wife with children. Our Bible reading shares Jesus' words, "Let the children come to me" (**MARK 10:14**). Parents bring their child to the baptismal font so that they can also be members of God's family. Through Baptism, our sins are forgiven and God declares that we belong to Him.

Our family's photos, unlike our picture poses, don't always include happy times and smiling faces. There are sad times in our families when parents argue and perhaps even get divorced. There are times when children disobey parents, and times when brothers and sisters don't get along with each other. Sometimes we look at a family photo and see someone who has died and is no longer part of our earthly family.

scripture

Mark 10:2–16

text

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' ... 'Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God'" (**MARK 10:7–8, 14**).

song

"Children of the Heavenly Father"
(*LSB 725, AGPS 80, OAR 271*)

The people in our photos aren't perfect. But Jesus died for every member of our family and, in His grace, He forgives us and brings us together in His church so that we can be part of His family forever.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, You created us to be in families. Our families are imperfect, but You sent Your Son, Jesus, to forgive our sins. Bless our families. Be with mothers and fathers and help them to love each other and to share the love of Jesus with their children. Thank You for bringing us into Your family, the church. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: Review the Fourth Commandment and explanation; review the Sixth Commandment and explanation; review the Table of Duties: To Husbands, To Wives, To Parents and To Children.
- ★ Invite students to bring and display family photos.

week 9: propers 23

Sell It All!

First Things

Display a “for sale” sign.

Have you ever seen this sign? Where or when? Perhaps you have seen it in front of a home that is for sale. Perhaps your family has put a sign out for a garage sale or similar event. Maybe you have been to the mall and saw the sign in a store window.

We may appreciate the sign if we are looking for an item and are hoping to save some money. In today’s Bible lesson, Jesus encourages a follower to put a “for sale” sign in front of everything he owns, and then He invites the rich young man to follow Him.

The Main Thing

Following Jesus is never simple or easy. Jesus’ follower in our Bible reading calls Him “Good Teacher.” The follower must have heard Jesus and been impressed with His teaching. The follower asked what he could do “to inherit eternal life.” The follower is rather impressed with works and behavior sharing that he had not murdered, stolen, committed adultery or done any other “major” sin.

Nothing we can do will ever earn us eternal life. There is no human payment for sin. The follower was only looking at the surface of his life. We may look at our lives in a similar way, concluding that we haven’t been bad and we’ve tried to be good. If we look deeper into our lives, we confess that we have sinful thoughts and desires. Sin is part of our nature. We have done many sinful actions.

The sinful heart of the follower is evident, as he is unwilling to give up his possessions to follow Jesus. The man can’t put out a “for sale” sign. He wants to keep control of his possessions and his life.

While our deeds or our possessions can’t earn our salvation, Jesus has purchased it all for us. The explanation to the Second Article explains that Jesus “purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His

scripture

Mark 10:17–22

text

“You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (MARK 10:21).

song

“Christ Be My Leader” (LSB 861, AGPS 81, OAR 316)

holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.” God was willing to buy us back through Jesus. What we could not purchase, Jesus did! Jesus sold it all to buy us as His own!

We are blessed to follow Jesus because He has made us His possession. We obey His commandments in thankful praise. Our earthly possessions are God’s gift to us, and we use them to worship Him and love others.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we confess that sometimes our pride and possessions get in the way of following You. We are thankful that Jesus paid the price to buy us back. We are Your children because of His “holy, precious blood and ... innocent suffering and death.” Thank You for the possessions You have given us and help us to manage them wisely. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- * Catechism study: Review the explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed; review the Ninth and Tenth Commandments and explanations.

week 10: propers 24

All Things Are Possible

First Things

Develop statements that elicit the response “That’s impossible!” Such as:

- ✱ “I am going to walk up the side walls and upside down on the ceiling.”
- ✱ “I am going to do 100 pushups in 1 minute.”

There are many things that are humanly impossible! In today’s Bible reading, the disciples are introduced to some impossible or at least unlikely scenarios. They come to the realization that it is humanly impossible to be saved. Jesus has Good News for them and us.

The Main Thing

In last week’s lesson, we were introduced to the rich young man who was not willing to sell his possessions to follow Jesus. The disciples wondered whether it was possible for that man or any wealthy person to enter the kingdom of God. Was it possible for anyone to enter into the kingdom?

The answer is it’s impossible for anyone to earn or buy a place in God’s kingdom. But God is about the impossible. God’s response is the truth of His Word.

(Have the students respond to the following statements with “It’s the truth!”)

“God made the world in six days.” “It’s the truth!”

“God promised to send a Savior after Adam and Eve sinned.” “It’s the truth!”

“God kept His promise and sent His Son into the world.” “It’s the truth!”

“Jesus did impossible miracles: feeding thousands, healing the sick and raising the dead.” “It’s the truth!”

“Jesus died on the cross for all our sins and rose again.” “It’s the truth!”

“God gives us forgiveness, life and salvation through our Baptism.” “It’s the truth!”

“We are saved, and we are members of the kingdom of God.” “It’s the truth!”

God did the humanly impossible and sent His Son to be the Savior. Jesus did the impossible and kept God’s law perfectly all the way to the cross. The Holy Spirit does the impossible and brings sinners like us into faith.

Jesus taught the disciples that “all things are possible with God.” While God is still certainly capable of impossible earthly things (healing the sick, protecting us from danger, etc.), His greatest miracle is bringing us and keeping us in His kingdom. We are blessed to be included in the truth of salvation. We are privileged to share His truth with others. When we face impossible challenges in our lives, we can trust our loving God in whom “all things are possible.”

scripture
Mark 10:23–31

text
“With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God” (MARK 10:27).

song
“Beautiful Savior” (LSB 537,
AGPS 70, OAR 237)

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, with You all things are possible. Lead us to the truth of Your Word, which shares Your humanly impossible plan to save the world with a Savior and to bring that salvation to each of us. Give us faith that hears Your truth. Help us to share that seemingly impossible truth with the world so that others are blessed to be in Your kingdom with us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✱ Review the seemingly impossible miracles of Jesus.
- ✱ Catechism study: Review “How can water do such great things?” (Third Section of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism); review the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer and explanation.

week 11: propers 25

All Merciful

First Things

Display the words “Kyrie Eleison.” Begin a dialog about the words with the students: Does anyone know the language from which these words come? (Latin) Have you heard these words before? Where or when? Does anyone know what the words mean? The words are found in today’s Bible reading, and they are important to our worship.

The Main Thing

In today’s lesson, Jesus continues His earthly ministry. For three years, through Jesus’ teaching and miracles, He proved that He was indeed the Son of God and the promised Savior. In the town of Jericho, a blind beggar calls out to Jesus. The blind beggar, Bartimaeus, acknowledges what he already knew about Jesus. He calls Jesus “Son of David.” Jesus had come from the family of King David. Jesus was the One promised to come from this family to save Israel (and the world).

Bartimaeus also recognizes that his problems are greater than his physical blindness. Bartimaeus calls for “mercy.” It is a cry of helplessness. It is a cry for God’s saving action. Only Jesus could save him from his sin. Jesus’ mercy to the blind beggar would go beyond giving him physical sight. (Which he did!) Jesus’ mercy would take Him to the cross where He would make payment for Bartimaeus’ spiritual blindness – the darkness of his sins.

Bartimaeus’ cry became part of our worship response. “Kyrie” is the Latin word for “Lord.” “Eleison” is the Latin word for “have mercy.” When we sing or say those

words in worship, we identify with the blind beggar. Jesus is holy and all-powerful. Jesus is the Son of David and Son of God. We are helpless and spiritually blind sinners. Jesus comes to us in His Word. Jesus hears our cry for mercy. Through the absolution given by the pastor, “As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins,” and through the blessings of our Baptism, the mercy of God comes to us.

The beggar now physically sees Jesus and follows Him. Jesus has had mercy on us. We humbly and joyfully worship Him. We give thanks for His mercy. We follow Him and serve Him faithfully.

scripture

Mark 10:46–52

text

“And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’” (MARK 10:47).

songs

“Today Your Mercy Calls Us” (LW 915, AGPS 249); “Lord, Have Mercy” (OAR 362)

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son to heal the physically blind and the spiritually blind. Thank You for Your mercy toward Bartimaeus and us. Thank You for the times and words of worship. Continue to hear our cry for mercy and equip us to faithfully follow You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Find the references to the Kyrie in the various orders of the Divine Service. Explore other Latin references in the Divine Service. Why do some of our liturgical responses have Latin titles?
- ✦ Discuss: Why do we call our Sunday worship “the Divine Service”?

week 12: reformation

Free Thing

First Things

Display the message “You’re free!” When might this message be really great news? (Explore real and imagined scenarios with the students: being held hostage and then released, imprisoned and pardoned, the Emancipation Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln, etc.).

Today’s Bible reading shares Jesus’ message, “You’re free!”

The Main Thing

Jesus’ audience in John 8, understood slavery. The Roman government of the time allowed slavery. The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. As Jesus spoke of freedom, they immediately responded that their heritage assured their present freedom. Their family had been freed from slavery in Egypt. Unlike other groups, they were not slaves to the Romans.

However, Jesus was speaking of another kind of slavery. Jesus teaches, “Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin” (v. 34). We are incapable of freeing ourselves from our sinful thoughts, desires, words and deeds. Jesus speaks of Himself: “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (v.36). The truth of Jesus’ act of freeing slaves to sin by His death on the cross is told in God’s Word. Hearing and believing the Word of freedom grants freedom from the slavery of sin.

We remember and celebrate the Reformation. Because of his beliefs and actions, Martin Luther spent time as a “prisoner” of the government and the church. More significantly, Martin Luther knew that he was imprisoned by his sin. Martin Luther struggled with his guilty conscience. He tried to free himself but only got more confused and confined. God led Martin Luther to the truth of the Word. Martin Luther read in the Bible that Jesus had freed him from his sin. Martin Luther shared the message of the freedom that comes through Jesus’ death and resurrection for the rest of his life.

The message of freedom comes to us. Sadly, we remember a time in our country’s history when people were owned as slaves. We are thankful for those who worked to free the slaves and for those who work today to share that freedom in our country and around the world. No matter the country we live in or the time in which we live, we will always be slaves to sin. We cannot free ourselves. The Good News of Jesus’ work and word comes to

scripture

John 8:31–36

text

“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (JOHN 8:31–32).

song

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”
(LSB 656 and 657, AGPS 50
and 51, OAR 262 and 263)

us. The Son has sent us free. The truth of that freedom is shared in God’s Word. The Spirit leads us to hear and believe that we, too, are free. The Reformation is a freedom celebration.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we confess that we, too, are slaves to sin and cannot free ourselves. Thank You for sending Your Son who sets the world and us free. Thank You for the Word that gives us the truth of our freedom. Thank You for Martin Luther and others who shared that Word in our history as a church. Continue to bless pastors, teachers, missionaries and others who share the truth of freedom today. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Catechism study: Review the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed and explanation.
- ✦ Review the life of Martin Luther and the history of the Reformation.
- ✦ Read Psalm 46 and Luther’s hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” Why is this called “the Hymn of the Reformation”?

week 13: propers 27

Every Thing!

First Things

Place an offering plate/basket on the floor (visible to the assembly). Assist a small child in placing a foot (or if possible, both feet) in the plate/basket.

Share the story of Scottish boy Robert Moffat, who asked the usher to put down the offering plate so he could step in the plate. Robert stated, “I not only give the money in my pocket, but my time, my strength and my whole life. I give myself.” Reportedly, Robert grew up to serve as a missionary in Africa.

The Main Thing

In Jesus’ time, there were no offering plates passed to worshipers. The temple (church) had boxes to receive the offerings from those who came to offer their sacrifices and worship at the temple. Sometimes the temple leaders observed those who brought the offering and judged how much they gave. Some of the temple leaders thought themselves better than other worshipers and were prideful of how much they gave. Jesus often warned those who thought they could earn God’s love or deserved His attention by how much they gave or did.

Jesus sees the offering of a very poor widow. The woman just put in two small coins. Our Bible words for today share Jesus’ praise of the widow’s offering: “She ... has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

The woman’s offering reminds us of another offering. Jesus gave everything for our salvation. Jesus gave up all the glory of heaven to come to earth and be part of a poor family. Jesus gave every moment of His time to teach of His kingdom. Jesus gave Himself. He gave every drop of His blood to save us from our sin.

The woman gave everything she had, trusting that God would take care of her. The woman knew that God would take care of all her needs.

Our God has taken care of our greatest need — the forgiveness of our sins. He also promises to take care of protecting us, clothing us, feeding us and giving us everything else we need. Believing in Jesus’ sacrifice for us and trusting in His providing for us, we show our thanks with our offerings. While we may not be able to

scripture

Mark 12:38–44

text

“This poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on” (MARK 12:43–44).

song

“We Give Thee But Thine Own” (LSB 781, AGPS 255); “Lord, Work in Me a Cheerful Heart” (OAR 293)

give all we have, we can share generously in our chapel and church offerings so that others may come to believe in our generous God.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we celebrate Your Son who gave Himself for us. Thank You for the faith and example of the widow. May we, too, trust that You will provide for us and share sacrificially from what You have given us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Catechism study: Review the explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed.
- ✦ Explain the purpose and designations of the chapel offerings.
- ✦ Have the pastor (or a representative of church stewardship/finance) share how and where the church offerings are designated.

week 14: propers 28

Things at the End

First Things

What do the following have in common: caboose, period, funeral, “amen,” etc.?

Observant (or creative) students may discern that they are “things at the end.” (The leader and/or students may come up with additions to the listing.)

We are thinking of “end things” this week because we are near the end of another Church Year. Obviously the Church Year is not like the calendar year. We still have several weeks left before we turn our calendar from December to a new year. The end of the Church Year reminds us that there will be an end to our world.

The Main Thing

Especially as Jesus got to the end of His earthly ministry, He spoke often about the end times. Part of God’s judgment against the sinful world was the return of Jesus to judge the evil of the world.

Jesus’ earthly ministry would come to an end. Jesus would suffer and die on the cross, bringing an ending sacrifice for the sins of the world. Jesus would rise again on the third day and show Himself alive to His disciples for 40 days. Jesus would then ascend into heaven. However, He promised that He would come back again on the Last Day.

In today’s reading, Jesus prepares His followers for the Last Day. Some of the signs of His return are given in our lesson (earthquakes, wars, persecution of Christians). As we read about these signs, we are reminded of the truth of God’s Word. Jesus will bring judgment on all those who do not know Him. We read about and experience some of these signs and are warned that Jesus will return.

Jesus’ warnings are followed by a promise: “The one who endures to the end will be saved.” Our salvation is always God’s gift to us. “Enduring” is not our preparation, patience or persistence. “Enduring” is being blessed with faith in Jesus. “Enduring” is continuing to believe that Jesus made the complete sacrifice for our sins. “Enduring” is being confident in our Baptism — that we have the gift of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. God’s Word brings and blesses our enduring.

We look forward to Jesus’ return. We will see Him in all His glory. We will worship Him at His eternal throne. There will be no more earthquakes, storms, persecutions or other painful endings. Even though we don’t know when Jesus will return, we do not have to fear His return. He will come and welcome us to be with Him.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, thank You for the warning that You will indeed judge the world. Thank You for the gift of faith that blesses us to “endure” when that end comes. Give us Your Spirit so that we might share Your warning with others so that they, too, might be part of Your triumphant return. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Review the Church Year calendar and the significance of the seasons of the Church Year. Review the colors of the altar hangings and pastoral stoles that go with each season.
- ★ Explore other Bible teachings on the end times and Jesus’ return.
- ★ Catechism study: Review the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer and explanation.

scripture

Mark 13:1–13

text

“The one who endures to the end will be saved” (MARK 13:13B).

song

“Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers” (LSB 515, OAR 234); “Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng” (LSB 813)

week 15: thanksgiving

Thankful for All Things

First Things

List the words “never,” “sometimes” and “always.” Students should choose a word in answer to the following (the leader may share other or additional options):

“I do my homework...”

“I clean my room...”

“I say ‘thank you’...”

Hopefully, you didn’t answer “never” to any of the statements. If we are honest, we probably are “sometimes” students and children. God’s Word for today reminds us to “always” give thanks.

The Main Thing

While sharing “thank you” is important every day, we especially think of that response this week of Thanksgiving.

Our Bible lesson tells about Jesus healing 10 lepers. Leprosy was a serious skin disease. Not only were those affected very uncomfortable, the disease was very contagious. There were strict rules as to where lepers could go and who could be around them. Lepers lived away from their family and friends.

Most likely, the lepers had heard of Jesus’ healing power and so they beg Him for His help: “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” Jesus sends the lepers to the priests. Lepers needed the blessing of priests to be able to go back to their normal, disease-free life. Jesus healed the lepers!

Remembering the story, what was the response of the majority of the lepers? Did they say “thank you” always, sometimes or never? The correct answer is “never.” Nine of the 10 lepers quickly forgot that Jesus had healed them. They forgot to say “thank you.”

The Bible compares our sins to having leprosy. Sin affects our whole being. We cannot heal ourselves. Jesus’ death on the cross is the miracle cure for the disease of our sin. Jesus has had mercy on us and given us full and free forgiveness.

Like the nine lepers, we often forget to give Jesus thanks for His forgiveness. We also forget to give Him

scripture

Luke 17:11–19

text

“Then Jesus answered, ‘Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’” (LUKE 17:17–18).

songs

“Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings” (LSB 782, OAR 292);
“Let All Things Now Living” (AGPS 155)

thanks for all the other blessings He gives us: family, friends, food, clothing, home and much more.

May we “always” give Jesus thanks, especially in this time of Thanksgiving. May we always give thanks in our times of worship together. May we show our thanks in our obedience in home and school – always.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, You always remember us and provide for us. In Jesus, You always forgive us our sins. Forgive us for the “never” and “sometimes” of our response. We especially give thanks for the country in which we live and the freedoms that You give us. Bless the Thanksgiving celebration in our country, our home and our church. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Sing favorite Thanksgiving hymns. Learn the history of some of those hymns.
- ★ Collect food or other items for a local pantry or homeless shelter.
- ★ Catechism study: Review the explanation to the Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. What “daily bread” has God given you for which you give thanks?

week 16: first week in advent

HOPE in All Things

First Things

Introduce the Advent wreath and some significant details about the wreath: candles symbolize Christ, the Light of the world; four candles for four Sundays in Advent; the blue candles remind us of the royalty of Jesus; the pink candle symbolizes “joy”; the Christ candle is in the middle and is lit on Christmas Eve as the culmination of the Advent wait.

During the Advent season, we are blessed to focus on the Advent wreath, which helps us to prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Each week during the Advent season, we light an additional candle. The candles not only aid us in our count-down, but traditionally there is a message which accompanies each candle. The first candle symbolizes “hope.”

The Main Thing

The “Main Thing” of this season will focus on the message of an Old Testament prophet. Today’s prophet is Jeremiah. The word “hopeless” could describe the period of history in which Jeremiah shared God’s Word with the people of Israel. One part of the once-powerful kingdom had already been conquered. During Jeremiah’s lifetime, Jerusalem would be destroyed and many would be taken as prisoners to Babylon. Jeremiah was thrown into prison; another time, he was put in a damp and dark well. He also was persecuted in other ways for sharing God’s message.

While most of us haven’t experienced situations that intense or extreme, we can relate to feeling “hopeless.” Some things just don’t seem to be working out for us personally or for our family. There may be illness, worries about money and disagreements with family or friends. Our hopelessness reminds us of the sinful world and the sin in our own lives and hearts. We are hopeless to finding a solution to our sin.

Jeremiah and the prophets shared God’s judgment against the people’s sins. The prophets also came to bring the Good News that God would keep the promise that He had made to Adam and Eve, Abraham, and King David and their ancestors. Jeremiah shares God’s Word: “I will fulfill the promise I made.” God had promised to send the Savior. Jesus comes as the “righteous Branch” from the family of David. Jesus comes as the righteous One who makes the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

When things seem hopeless, we have a Savior who brings hope. The hope we have in Jesus is not a Christmas wish. It is the fulfillment of the promise made through Jeremiah. The promises of our Baptism are sure. Our sins are forgiven. We will be with Jesus forever. No matter our problems or situations, we find hope in Jesus in all seasons.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, sometimes things in our world seem hopeless. Sometimes things in our family seem hopeless. You sent Your Son as the fulfillment of the promises of Jeremiah and the prophets. When we look at the Advent wreath, we remember Jesus, the Light of the world, who brings hope. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Share more about the experiences and the message of Jeremiah.
- ✦ Have each classroom (or each child) assemble their own Advent wreath. Encourage families to gather around an Advent wreath.
- ✦ Share the opportunities for Advent worship with the family of the church.

scripture

Jeremiah 33:14–16

text

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (JER. 33:14).

songs

“The Advent of Our King” (LSB 331);
“Light One Candle” (AGPS 163);
“We Light the Advent Candle”
(OAR 172)

week 17: second week in advent

PEACE in All Things

First Things

Continue a review of the importance and symbolism of the Advent wreath. (Perhaps the pastor or an Altar Guild member could assist with the explanation.) Share other Advent preparations in the church. Review the “hope” candle of the first week in Advent.

This week, we light the second candle on the wreath. We are getting closer to the celebration of Jesus’ birth. The second candle is traditionally called the “peace” candle.

While songs of the season and bright decorations give a peaceful feeling, many people don’t have peace this time of the year. The prophet Malachi brings a message of peace.

The Main Thing

Malachi was the last of the prophets God sent to His people before He fulfilled the promise to send Jesus. Malachi is the last of the books of the Old Testament.

Even though God’s people of promise were back from captivity and back worshiping in the temple, things were not peaceful. The priests who led the worship were not always faithful in following God’s direction for worship. God’s people didn’t always remember His promise and worship Him faithfully. The people could not bring about the changes that would bring peace with God and with each other.

Sometimes our lives are robbed of peace because we put other things ahead of God and our worship of Him. We forget that peace doesn’t come in a certain present or a certain pre-Christmas activity. Peace doesn’t always come in our family’s activity or friendships. There are times when things are not peaceful in our homes or schools. We cannot bring about the changes that assure peace on our own.

Malachi reminded God’s people that God has never – and will never – change His promise or love for them.

In Jesus, God’s response to us is not one of anger and judgment. God’s response is to bring His forgiveness to us and the peace of knowing that we are God’s children. God brought about the peace-giving change in sending Jesus.

The glimmer of an Advent candle looks peaceful. The candle reminds us that the glimmer of God’s promise to Malachi and to God’s people has been fulfilled.

When Jesus is born, the angels announce, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (LUKE 2:14). May it be a peaceful season for each of us as we hear about the peace of Jesus and worship Him.

scripture

Malachi 3:1–7b

text

“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Israel, are not consumed” (MAL. 3:6).

song

“Savior of the Nations, Come”
(LSB 332, AGPS 205,
OAR 171)

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we live in a world where there is not peace between countries and between different groups of people. Sometimes even in our own communities and families, we wish for peace. We rejoice that Jesus came to fulfill the promise to Malachi. Jesus came as the Prince of Peace. Thank You for bringing His peace to us and through us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Share the “peace be with you” responses in the worship settings. What is their significance?
- ★ Where is the message of peace spoken in the Christmas narrative?
- ★ Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. Review the 39 books.
- ★ Learn more about Malachi and the minor prophets.

week 18: third week in advent

JOY in All Things

First Things

Review the meaning and message of the Advent wreath. Christ IS the Light of the world, and we prepare to celebrate His birth. A major emphasis of the season is to prepare in repentance and humility. The third week, the pink candle is lit. In the midst of our focus on repentance, we note “joy.”

Share various Christmas decorations, banners and so on that include the word “joy.” There are many expressions of “joy” during this season of the year. Only in Jesus do we have the true joy of the season.

The Main Thing

God’s Word to us is again from one of God’s Old Testament prophets. Zephaniah is a short, three-chapter book in the Old Testament (and is rather difficult to pronounce). Like many of the other prophets, Zephaniah was sent by God to share His message of judgment. The prophet begins the message, “I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth” (ZEPH. 1:2). God’s response to our evil is His judgment.

The Advent season is a time to also remember that Jesus will come again on the Last Day. He will come to judge the world. The earth and all that is in it will disappear. Everyone will stand before the throne of God on the Last Day. Without Jesus that will be a very frightening and sad time.

The Book of Zephaniah concludes with a message of joy. “The LORD has taken away the judgments against you” (3:15); “the LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save” (3:17). God’s people did not need to fear their enemies because God would be their deliverer. We do not need to fear our enemy, the devil, because we have a Deliverer. We do not need to fear the final judgment because Jesus came as the baby in Bethlehem and the Savior of the world to deliver us.

Even in the season of “joy,” we do not always feel joyful. The decorations of “joy” are taken down soon after Christmas. Sometimes, the Christmas family gatherings are not always joyful. Even the pink candle on the wreath will not burn forever. However, having Jesus as our Savior brings joy to us every season and every day. Having Jesus as our Savior brings us joy eternally.

scripture

Zephaniah 3:14–20

text

“Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!” (ZEPH. 3:14).

songs

“Hark the Glad Sound” (LSB 349);
“Rejoice in the Lord Always” (AGPS 203); “The King of Glory Comes” (OAR 205)

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we live in a world that is not always joyful. There are times when we do not see or feel the joy in our own lives. Thank You for the joy of Jesus who faced the judgment for our sin so that we might have joy now and eternally with Him. Help us to be messengers of the joy of Jesus. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- * Find references to “joy” in Advent and Christmas hymns.
- * Learn more about the prophet Zechariah and other “minor” prophets.
- * How can our joy in Jesus be shared with others?

week 19: fourth week in advent

LOVE in All Things

First Things

Review again the significance of the Advent wreath as an aid to our Advent worship. During the fourth week of the season, the final candle is lit. Throughout the season, we have prepared to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Light of the world.

Review the hope, peace and joy themes of the previous weeks. The final candle traditionally brings the message of “love.”

Gather “lovely” Christmas pictures or objects. What do you picture as “lovely” about Christmas? Perhaps we see a neatly decorated tree and comment, “That’s lovely.” The “lovely” Christmas dessert is placed on the table. We visit a “lovely” home or museum. Christmas is a “lovely” time. The greatest love is the love of Jesus.

The Main Thing

This week we meet another Advent prophet — Micah. The prophet again is God’s voice of justice and judgment. The prophet announces, “All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel” (MICAH 1:5). God’s people had chosen to serve other gods. It is not a “lovely” time in Israel. Advent is a time of repentance where we, too, confess that we are not faithful to the one true God. We do not faithfully love God or others. We often have our own gods.

God chose to love the unlovable. God would keep His promise to send the Savior. Six hundred years before the Savior was born, Micah announces that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was not a “lovely” place. It was a small, insignificant town. Micah calls Bethlehem “too little to be among the clans of Judah.”

The Christmas story of Luke 2 tells us that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be taxed and that Jesus was born in the little town of Bethlehem. It was not a “lovely” scene. Jesus did not have “lovely” clothing; He was wrapped in rags. Jesus did not have a “lovely” bed; He was placed in a manger.

God chose this unlovely setting to share the greatest gift of love the world had ever received. A simple Christmas song reminds us that God chose to share

scripture

Micah 5:2–5a

text

“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel” (MICAH 5:2).

songs

“God Loves Me Dearly” (LSB 392, AGPS 109, OAR 182)

His message with Micah; God chose Mary and Joseph; God chose a small town called Bethlehem. God chose to send His Son because He loved us dearly. “God loves me dearly, Loves even me.”

Not everything about our Christmas scenes will always be “lovely.” But God’s love will always be true and present in Jesus. Celebrating Jesus’ birth will be a “lovely” Christmas.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us enough to send Your Son to Bethlehem to be our Savior. When we think we are too little to share Your love or tell Your story, remind us that You chose little Bethlehem to welcome Jesus. Grant us a “lovely” Christmas. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Find out more about the town of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus’ birth.
- ★ Sing the hymn “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”
- ★ What do you love about Christmas?

christmas

All These Things

First Things

Accumulate an assortment of Christmas gifts: clothes, electronics, toys, etc.

Many of us are blessed to receive gifts at Christmas. We get a variety of things. Several years ago, the newspaper cartoon page showed Dennis the Menace surrounded by the many Christmas gifts that he had opened. Dennis looks at the gifts and asks, “Is that all there is?” Are we ever disappointed in the things of Christmas? Do we ever let the things of Christmas keep us from receiving and rejoicing in The Main Thing?

The Main Thing

The Gospel writer Luke shares the “things” of the first Christmas. Children may be asked to review some of the “things” (facts) of the Christmas story. This might also be a good time to share the difference between the “facts” of the Gospel and some of the “traditions” (e.g., Scripture doesn’t specifically note that Mary rode a donkey to Bethlehem). The Bible does tell us:

- ✱ Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
- ✱ Jesus was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger.
- ✱ An angel announced Jesus’ birth to shepherds.
- ✱ A “host” of angels sang a song of praise.
- ✱ The shepherds went to Bethlehem and saw their Savior.
- ✱ The shepherds shared the Good News with others.

As the mother of the Savior, Mary saw and heard everything that happened at Jesus’ birth. When Mary had been told by the angel that she was to be the mother of the Savior, Mary had humbly accepted her role and had told the angel, “I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (LUKE 1:38). Mary now saw how God had kept His promise through her.

Mary would “ponder” many More Things throughout Jesus’ life. She would be a concerned mother as her 12-year-old Son seemed to be lost. She would be amazed at His miracles. She would be at Jesus’ cross pondering the agony of the crucifixion. She would be at Jesus’ tomb to see that her Son, and the Son of God, was alive again.

Christmas is a time to ponder — not how many things we get or didn’t get — but to remember the most important thing of all. God has sent His Son as the greatest gift of all. We are blessed to know that Jesus is with us this Christmas and always. Jesus is The Main Thing of Christmas.

scripture

Luke 20:1–20

text

“But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart” (LUKE 2:19).

song

“Away in a Manger” (LSB 364 and 365, AGPS 68, OAR 185)

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we confess that we too often focus on the things of Christmas — the gifts, the celebrations, the decorations and so on. We celebrate The Main Thing — the birth of our Savior. Thank You for the example of Mary who was blessed to “ponder” all that had happened in her life and all that had happened at Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem. Bless our Christmas worship in our church and our devotional times with our families. Deepen our faith in the Christ of Christmas. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✱ Sing and share favorite Christmas hymns.
- ✱ Explore Christmas customs of Christians around the world.

week 20: first week after christmas

For All Peoples

First Things

Share pictures of diverse people groups – male and female, different ages, different skin colors, a variety of nationalities, etc.

What do you notice about the people and faces that you've seen? (They are all different.) We praise God for every person and personality He has created. Today we hear Simeon rejoice in the Savior who has come for all peoples.

The Main Thing

Mary and Joseph obediently followed the rules that God had given His people for worship. Forty days after Jesus' birth, they go to the temple in Jerusalem to offer the sacrifices of thanks and dedication for the infant Jesus. In that setting, they meet Simeon.

Luke tells us that old Simeon had been waiting patiently to see his Savior. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that the baby that Joseph and Mary brought into the temple was the Savior. Simeon immediately praises God, "For my eyes have seen your salvation."

We have seen again the Child in the nativity scenes. We have heard again in the Christmas story about the baby in a manger and the visit of shepherds. God's Word through Simeon shares that this is more than a nice scene or story. It is the story of salvation. God sent His only Son into the world to save the world from sin and death. Simeon saw the baby and saw the Savior with his own eyes and held Jesus in his arms. As we read God's Word and hear the words of Simeon, we, too, hear and "see" that Jesus has come to be our Savior. The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts to believe in Jesus.

God had kept His promise to Simeon and the people of Israel. God also kept His promise that the Savior

would be the Savior for all peoples of all times. Jesus is our Savior. Just as we need a Savior from sin, so does everyone else. Jesus is the Savior for people of all the countries and cultures of the world. Our sinful eyes often see the differences in people. With eyes on Jesus, we see with Simeon the light for all peoples, and the Savior of all.

Simeon was God's messenger in the temple. We are God's messengers today to share the Christmas Good News that the Savior has been born in Bethlehem. Simeon saw his salvation. We have heard of our salvation. May we share with everyone what we have seen and believed with our eyes of faith.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son as the baby born in Bethlehem and shown to Simeon at the temple in Jerusalem. May we rejoice with Simeon in the Savior who came for us. Help us to share Your light and Your glory with all people in our family, community and into the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- * Review where Simeon's words become part of our response in the Divine Service. Why is the response appropriate for our worship?
- * Learn more about Anna who also greeted her Savior in the temple.
- * Explore how the Good News of Jesus' birth is celebrated and shared in other countries and cultures.

scripture

Luke 2:22-40

text

"For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (LUKE 2:30-32).

songs

"Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace" (LSB 937); "Go Now in Peace" (AGPS 103); "Song of Simeon" (OAR 370)

week 21: baptism of our lord

All Pleasing!

First Things

Focus on the baptismal font in the sanctuary. The dialog with the children may include some of these questions: What is this piece of church “furniture” called? When is it used in our worship? What happens here? What’s the significance of the font placement in the sanctuary?

When we witness a Baptism in our worship service, it is a very special and exciting time. In today’s Bible lesson, we read about a very special and exciting time in Jesus’ ministry. Jesus’ Baptism reminds us of the blessings of our own Baptism.

The Main Things

The Bible tells us about Jesus’ birth and His visit to the temple when He was 12. That’s the last we read of Jesus’ life until His Baptism in the Jordan River when He was 30 years old. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. It is now time for Jesus to begin His earthly ministry and His journey to the cross.

Jesus is baptized to take care of every detail of God’s plan for His Son. As the perfect Son of God, Jesus did not have to be baptized to have His sins washed away. Jesus is baptized to “please” and affirm God’s plan. Not only is the Father pleased in Jesus’ Baptism, but the Holy Spirit is also present to celebrate the presence and power of the Trinity.

The Father is “well pleased” with all the Son was and did. In our sinful nature, God is not “well pleased” with us. We cannot please God by any of our actions. God chose to bring the blessings of Jesus’ work to us in our Baptism. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit present at Jesus’ Baptism were also present in our Baptism. “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” the pastor poured water on our head. In Baptism, God takes us on the journey with Jesus to His Baptism, death and resurrection.

Not everything that we do at home, school or any place else is pleasing to God. We are still sinful people. However, through Baptism the blessings of salvation are ours. God is pleased with us even when we cannot please Him or others.

When we gather for worship, we begin in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As we look at the

scripture

Luke 3:15–22

text

“The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (LUKE 3:22).

songs

“God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It” (LSB 594, OAR 252); “Father Welcomes All His Children” (AGPS 95)

baptismal font, we are reminded that we are worshipping as God’s children. In Jesus, He is pleased with us and we know that our worship will be pleasing to Him. We go from the sanctuary to please Him in all we do.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we rejoice in Your all-pleasing Son. We rejoice in His Baptism and all that He has done to bring salvation to us. Thank You for the blessings of our Baptism, and that through the saving work of Jesus we are pleased to be called Your children. Send Your Spirit in us so that we, too, might please You always. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: Review “What is Baptism?” from the Sacrament of Holy Baptism section.
- ★ Jesus’ Baptism begins the Epiphany season of the Church Year. Share the significance of “Epiphany” and our worship during this season.

week 22: second week after the epiphany

All the Signs

First Things

Show pictures of (or, if possible, bring in) various road signs. Discuss the signs with the children.

What do these signs mean? Where would we find this sign? What's the purpose of the sign? Why is it important to obey signs?

Most likely, there weren't road signs on the paths that Jesus and His disciples walked. However, God's Word tells us about other signs that Jesus' followers saw. We, too, can see and read these "signs" in God's Word.

The Main Thing

Immediately after His Baptism (last week's focus), Jesus begins His earthly ministry. For three years, Jesus shows and shares that He is the Son of God and Savior from sin. An important part of Jesus' ministry was performing miracles.

Today's lesson from the Gospel of John tells about Jesus' first miracle. Jesus joins His family and friends at a wedding. Weddings in Jesus' time were often large events involving many people over several days. The celebrating necessitated lots of food and wine. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother, Mary, shared the problem with Him.

Jesus has the wedding servants fill six large stone containers (20–30 gallons each) with water. Jesus turns the water into wine (120–150 gallons). The wine Jesus miraculously makes is the best of the wedding feast. God's Gospel writer John calls the miracle a "sign." It is a sign of who Jesus was. The disciples also saw the sign knew and believed that Jesus was not just another wedding guest. They saw the glory of the Son of God. As they followed Jesus and saw other signs, they would see more proof of Jesus' power.

Just as signs give directions to a destination, Jesus' signs show that His destination was the cross. The miracle worker in Cana would bring about the miracle of our salvation.

As we walk along the streets or as our parents drive, we don't always see or obey the signs. Just as it is important for us to see and obey traffic signs, it is important that

scripture

John 2:1–11

text

"This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him" (JOHN 2:11).

song

"Songs of Thankfulness and Praise"
(LSB 394, OAR 188); "Someone Special" (AGPS 217)

we see the signs of who Jesus is and what He has done for us. We read His Word, look at, believe and follow the signs so that we can see His glory forever.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, thank You for posting the signs of Your Son in Scripture. Give us the faith eyes to see and read the signs so that we, too, can see Jesus as the Son of God and our Savior. Bless us as we point others to Your signs so that they, too, can reach the destination of heaven with us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Find the seven "signs" in the Gospel of John.
- ★ Jesus was at the wedding in Cana. Why is it important today to invite Jesus to weddings and other special family times? Why are weddings often held in our church?
- ★ What is the significance of the "sign" of the cross?

week 23: third week after the epiphany

Hearing Things

First Things

Show a picture or model of the human ear. Share some of the facts and features of the ear's anatomy.

We celebrate the wonder of the human body and the senses that God has given us. Today, we consider our ears and the sense of hearing.

Think of all the things that we can hear: We hear the pastor sharing God's Word, we hear the teacher explaining the lesson, we hear our friends and family members talking to us, we hear the sounds of nature – singing birds, rumbling thunder, etc. (Engage the students in other sounds and the gift of the sense of hearing.)

The Main Things

God gave us hearing for conversation and enjoyment of the sounds of nature. He also gave us the sense of hearing to hear His Word.

Today's Bible lesson shares Jesus' interaction with some people who were not hearing Him. Jesus is in His hometown of Nazareth and is teaching in the synagogue (their church). Jesus is reading the words of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah.

The audience heard Jesus' words, and "all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth" (LUKE 4:22). The audience heard the sounds that came from Jesus' mouth, but they didn't hear His message. Perhaps your teacher or parent has given you a message, and you heard the sounds but didn't do what they asked you to do. Perhaps they said, "Didn't you hear me?"

Sometimes we don't want to hear things that we don't like to hear. We don't like to hear that we have hurt someone else's feelings. We don't like to hear that we haven't done our work well or given our best effort. Sin affects everything we are and do. Sin affects our hearing!

Jesus' audience did not like to hear that they and their family members before them had not been faithful listeners. They got so angry and defensive at Jesus' judgment that they wanted to throw Him off a cliff and kill Him.

The Holy Spirit opens our hearts and opens our ears to hear God's Word. We hear about our sin and confess that our hearts and ears need to be cleansed. We hear the Teacher, Jesus, who went on from Nazareth to the cross where He spoke words of forgiveness. Those who heard Jesus and believed that He was the Son of God were saved.

We are blessed to hear Jesus' words in our classrooms, in chapel and in Sunday worship. We are blessed to hear Jesus' words as we gather with our family in devotions and as we personally read His Word. May we listen carefully and faithfully at all times and places.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, thank You for our ears and the sense of hearing. Bless our listening of Your Word in church, school and home. Help us to hear and believe. Bless all those who share God's Word with those who are blessed with a healthy sense of hearing and with those who are deaf or hard of hearing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Learn more about the church's mission to individuals who are deaf.
- ★ Catechism study: Review the Third Commandment and explanation.

scripture

Luke 4:16–30

text

"And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'" (LUKE 4:21).

songs

"Lord, Open Now My Heart to Hear" (LSB 908); "Open Our Eyes" (AGPS 195); "Speak, O Lord" (OAR 251)

week 24: fourth week after the epiphany

All Authority

First Things

Identify persons of authority. Who has authority in our country? In our state? In our city? In our church? In our school?

“Authority” means to have responsibility and power over others. Authority is important for our safety. It is important to respect authority.

Who has authority over the devil? Today, we learn about the authority of Jesus.

The Main Thing

To not respect authority is not a good thing. The devil came to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and assumed he had authority over them. The devil suggested that by listening to him, “you will be like God” (GEN. 3:5). Adam and Eve rejected God’s authority. By listening to the devil, their perfect world crumbled.

Immediately after the fall, God promised that He would be the final authority: “He shall bruise your head” (GEN. 3:15). Jesus came as the fulfillment of God’s promise to defeat the devil. During His earthly ministry, Jesus does battle with the devil several times (the temptation, confronting evil spirits). Our Bible reading for today tells of one of Jesus’ encounters with demons. Jesus’ powerful words bring the demon from the man and free the man from the torment of the demon. The people saw and heard that “his word possessed authority” (v. 32).

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus showed His authority over the devil. Jesus’ ultimate victory over the devil was shown on Easter Sunday morning. As Jesus died on the cross on Good Friday, it appeared as if the devil had won. Three days later, Jesus came out of the tomb alive. Jesus had crushed Satan. We confess Jesus’ victory over the devil when we confess the Apostles’ Creed and say, “He descended into hell.” Jesus descended to hell to let the devil know that He had won!

The devil still tempts us. The devil still wants to take authority over our decisions and lives. In those times, we remember that Jesus’ authority over the devil gives us authority over the devil. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther reminds us that Baptism “works

scripture

Luke 4:31–44

text

“And they were all amazed and said to one another, ‘What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!’” (LUKE 4:36).

song

“Thy Strong Word” (LSB 578, AGPS 246, OAR 249)

forgiveness of sin, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare” (“What benefits does Baptism give?”).

We celebrate the ultimate authority of Jesus! Jesus’ Word gives us His authority to use in times of temptation.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the authority of Your Word, which tells us of the authority of Jesus. Thank You that through His death and resurrection You have taken all authority from the devil. When the devil tempts me, lead me to the power of my Baptism and the authority of Your Word. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: Review “What benefits does Baptism give?” from the Sacrament of Holy Baptism section; review the Sixth and Seventh Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer and explanations.

week 25: fifth week after the epiphany

All Amazed and Engaged

First Things

Bring fishing equipment, including a hand net used to bring in the “catch.”

How many of you have ever been fishing? Many of you may be familiar with these fishing equipment items. (Display some of the items – poles, bait, hooks, lures, etc. – and get responses about the use of the equipment in fishing experiences.) What is the net used for? (Bringing the catch safely into the boat or on shore so the fish don’t escape back into the water.)

The Main Thing

Jesus went fishing! Our Scripture reading for today is the first of several times in Jesus’ ministry where we find Him by a lake and interacting with fishermen. With several lakes in the area where Jesus lived, fishing was an important source of food and an important occupation. Like today, some people also fish for the fun of the experience.

Jesus is in a fishing boat with Simon. In the context of Jesus’ time, the fishing equipment was rather simple. The fisherman didn’t use poles and bait and some of the fishing equipment we may use. The basic equipment was a net that was let off the side of the boat. They hoped the net would catch the fish swimming by the boat. Jesus gives fishing advice to Simon, and miraculously the nets are full of fish.

Peter realized that the passenger in his boat was not just another curious observer. Peter calls his passenger “Master” and when he sees the amazing catch, he realizes he is in the presence of the Lord (“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” [v. 8]). Before Peter can be in the salvation “net” of Jesus’ grace and power, he has to realize that he is not a worthy “catch.” None of us are worthy to be in the presence of Jesus.

There was a much more important “net” being let down than the fishing net. Jesus was catching followers. Jesus chose to bring Peter into His net. Every time a Baptism

takes place, every time God’s Word is taught, Jesus is letting down the net and bringing in a catch for the kingdom.

Jesus was doing more than participating in a fishing experience on the lake of Gennesaret. Jesus was “fishing” for disciples. It was God’s plan that Jesus would have a special group of students who would travel with Him, listen to His teaching and watch His miracles. These disciples would follow Jesus all the way to the cross and tomb. They would see the risen Jesus. They would share the news of Jesus’ Words and invite others to follow Jesus. The fishermen would continue to let down nets and to make a catch. They would be using the net of God’s Word to catch other followers for Jesus. We are glad that we have been brought into His net. We, too, become “fishers” of men, women and children when we share God’s Word.

scripture Luke

5:1–11

text

“For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men’” (LUKE 5:9–10).

songs

“Hail, O Source of Every Blessing” (LSB 409); “Kids of the Kingdom” (APGS 150); “They Cast Their Nets” (OAR 307)

In All Things

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son among the fishermen so that they could “catch men.” Thank You for bringing us into the “net” of Your grace. May we continue to go fishing for You, bringing others into Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: Review the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer and explanation.
- ★ Invite a missionary (in person or electronically) to share their “fishing” experiences.
- ★ Do a Gospels exploration of the times Jesus is with fishermen.
- ★ Invite an experienced fisherman or woman to share fishing equipment and experiences.

week 26: sixth week after the epiphany

All Powerful

First Things

Display or list sources of power (large and small): wind turbine, hydro-electric dam, generator, engines, batteries, etc.

What do these items have in common? They are all sources of power. (Depending on the age of children, more details may be shared about the dynamics and power of the sources.)

Some of these sources generate a vast amount of energy. Some of the sources have been producing power for years and most likely will continue in production. No matter the power source, the power is limited and uncertain. A wind generator doesn't work unless the wind is blowing; if the water stops flowing, a hydro-electric plant is powerless.

The Main Thing

In today's Scripture reading, we are introduced to a limitless power supply: Jesus. Jesus' miracles demonstrated His divine power. Jesus commanded the seas to be calm and the winds to stop. Jesus commanded demons to come out of the demon possessed. Jesus had again healed the diseased. The Gospel writer Luke states, "For power came out from him and healed them all" (v. 19).

There has never been and never will be a source of power on earth like the power of Jesus. The power of God that had created and preserved the earth came as a human being in Jesus. In His human form, Jesus looked like any other person; but when He spoke or touched, those who were with Him witnessed His power. Jesus is the all-powerful Son of God.

The all-powerful Jesus chose not to display His power all the time. Jesus allowed Himself to be ridiculed and beaten. Jesus allowed Himself to be nailed to the cross.

When the thief on the cross begged for a display of Jesus' power, He chose to be powerless. In His suffering and death, Jesus showed another kind of power. It was the power to save. Jesus saved the world not by a display of earthly power, but by a submission to the plan of God. Only by dying on the cross could Jesus accomplish our salvation.

Like the people who came to Jesus, we come to Him powerless in our sin. We can do nothing to save ourselves. We rejoice that, through the power of Baptism, we are made His. We are blessed by His power to be saved, and so we will witness His power and glory eternally.

We continue to see the power of God in His creation and we are in awe of His power. When we see a child baptized, the word of forgiveness spoken by the pastor or Jesus' presence in Holy Communion, we continue to see the power of God's Word. Through His church, Jesus continues to share His power to save. We continue to see and receive His power.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we are amazed and humbled by the power of Jesus. Thank You for the evidence of His powerful miracles. We are blessed to see Jesus on the cross and to see that He is alive again. We are blessed to receive His power to save.

When we were powerless in our sin, You brought the saving power of Your death and resurrection to us. We remain confident in Your saving power. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: Review "What is the Office of the Keys?" (Confession) and the Conclusion to the Lord's Prayer.

scripture

Luke 6:17-26

text

"And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all" (LUKE 6:19).

songs

"O Jesus, King Most Wonderful!" (LSB 554); "Jesus in the Morning" (AGPS 143); "O Christ Arise" (OAR 258)

week 27: seventh week after the epiphany

Love for All

First Things

Share a valentine (or valentine gift – candy, flower, etc.) with just a few students.

How did you feel when I gave out just a few valentines? Were you disappointed? (Perhaps reference the “Peanuts” valentine episode where Charlie Brown doesn’t get any valentines.)

Obviously, we can’t give valentines to everyone. It’s OK to give a special valentine to someone special to us. Jesus, however, has the same love for everyone, and in today’s Scripture reading, Jesus tells us to love others – even our enemies.

The Main Thing

We have experienced another valentine “season.” Advertisements encourage people to buy cards, candy, flowers and other gifts for their favorite valentines. Classrooms may have had Valentine’s Day parties. Imagine a valentine commercial that encouraged everyone to send a valentine or gift to someone they did not like or perhaps even hated. That’s the message Jesus gives to His followers in today’s Gospel reading. Jesus says, “Love your enemies” (vv. 27, 35). Jesus teaches us to pray for those who hurt us and to do good things for those who may not do good things for us.

Jesus’ words remind us that we live in a world of broken relationships. One country goes to war against another country. One family member does not get along with another family member. Friendships are often broken by gossip, social media posts and other actions. All relationships were broken with the fall into sin. Cain kills Abel; Esau is jealous of Jacob and wants to kill him; Joseph’s brothers sell him to Egyptian travelers. We all confess that we have thoughts of hatred or intense dislike for others, and sometimes we even act on our thoughts. In our sinful nature, we are enemies of God.

Jesus came into the world of hatred. Jesus’ family rejected Him. The citizens of His hometown rejected Him. Disciple Peter denied Him. Disciple Judas betrayed Him. The Jews cried, “Crucify him.” The Roman soldiers mocked Him and nailed Him to the cross. However, Jesus loved His enemies enough to die for them ... and for us. The apostle Paul wrote, “At the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (ROM. 5:6).

scripture

Luke 6:27–38

text

“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (LUKE 6:27–28).

song

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” (LSB 700); “Beloved, Let Us Love One Another” (AGPS 72); “The God of Love” (OAR 282)

Jesus, who loved His enemies, loved us so that we might share His love with everyone, including those who may have hurt us and those we find difficult to love. The example of that love is always the perfect sacrificial love of Jesus. The power to love comes from the Holy Spirit, who brings Jesus’ love to us and opens our hearts to love everyone.

Jesus’ love for us is much deeper and longer than a Valentine’s Day response. We now share Jesus’ love with everyone, even our enemies. We share Jesus’ love every day.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, You chose to send Jesus into a world of hatred. You knew He would be hated, yet You were willing to make Your Son the sacrifice. Forgive us for our unkindness and even our hatred of others. In the love of Jesus, help us to love others, even our enemies. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Share valentines and messages of love with nursing home residents, those who are homebound or others who may appreciate a special message.
- ✦ Explain the significance of the Greek word “agape” and the “agape” love of Jesus.

week 28: transfiguration of our lord

All Glory

First Things

Display things that hide or lessen the intensity of light: sunglasses, window shades, a blindfold, a welder's shield, etc. What do these items have in common?

They are all means to protect our eyes from bright light or to keep out light (to sleep or to better view a television program, movie or screen, etc.). Sometimes it is healthy or helpful to hide light.

In today's Gospel lesson, the light of Jesus was no longer hidden, and three disciples see the full brightness and glory of Jesus. We, too, see His glory at the Transfiguration.

The Main Thing

In the Old Testament, Moses was blessed to meet God on the mountain (EX. 3). Moses could not look at God because the glory (light) of God was too great for his human eyes. Moses shared his praise of God, "Who is like you, ... majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds" (EX. 15:11).

As the Son of God, Jesus had the holiness and full glory of His Father. When Jesus came to earth in His full human nature, His glory was hidden. People saw the human being who walked, talked, cried, ate, slept and lived a fully human and perfect life. In a sense, the light of Jesus was hidden by His human nature. Today's Gospel reading is a very special event in the life of Jesus. This event is called the "Transfiguration."

Jesus takes three disciples — Peter, James and John — with Him on a mountain. The three disciples see the shade lifted, the sunglasses taken off. The disciples see the full glory of Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God. The disciples not only see His glory, but they hear the voice of the Father from the cloud, "This is my Son, my Chosen One."

During the past weeks of the Epiphany season, God's Word has given us glimpses of Jesus' glory through His teachings and miracles. This week's lesson gives us the full picture of who Jesus is. What a blessing it is to see our Lord and Savior shine!

The Transfiguration picture of Jesus is always important. We worship Him and give Him glory in all times and seasons. This week, the church transitions to the season of Lent. We will again see a different picture of Jesus. We will see Him as the Savior who is rejected,

scripture

Luke 9:28–36

text

"And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white" (LUKE 9:29).

songs

"Jesus on the Mountain Peak" (LSB 415, OAR 194); "This Is He" (AGPS 239)

beaten and ultimately crucified for us. As we see the suffering Jesus, we remember the transfigured Jesus who truly is the Son of God.

In His human nature, Jesus' glory was hidden. Sometimes the things of the world hide the glory of Jesus from us. Sometimes, in our pride, we choose to hide Jesus' glory and seek our own. The Holy Spirit takes away all that may hide Jesus from us. The Holy Spirit takes us to the mountain to see our glorious Lord and Savior. Through our Baptism, the Holy Spirit gave us faith to see the glory of Jesus who came to Calvary's mountain to save us. Through the preaching and teaching of God's Word, the Spirit blesses us to see the glory of Jesus again and again.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we celebrate Your glory and that of Your beloved and holy Son. Thank You for revealing the glory of Jesus to the disciples on the mountain and to us. As we journey into Lent, help us to always keep our eyes on Jesus, the glorious beloved Son and the suffering Savior. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Review Epiphany season.
- ✦ Compare the Transfiguration accounts of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.
- ✦ In what other events did Jesus include Peter, James and John?

week 29: first week in lent

Jesus Is Creator of All

First Things

Find pictures or other media (video, etc.) displaying the beauty and magnificence of God's creation.

Discuss the presentation: What do we learn from these pictures? Who created what we saw? We praise God for the wonders of His creation!

In our worship during the weeks of the Lenten season, we are going to hear again and again the words of Colossians 1:15–20. The words tell us that Jesus is all! Jesus is Lord of all! Today we hear that Jesus is Creator of all.

The Main Thing

The Bible begins with this fact: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (GEN. 1:1). We know that the creating God is the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three Persons were present at and participated in the creation. The “us” (GEN. 1:26) of the Trinity created man in the image of God.

Jesus' presence and participation in the creation is shared in John 1, “All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (V. 3). In today's Bible reading, the apostle Paul shares the same truth: “For by him all things were created.” To say that Jesus created all things is not to lessen the work of God the Father. In the Apostles' Creed, we confess, “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit created all things.

The perfect world created by Jesus was ruined by sin. Adam and Eve went from the Garden of Eden to a cursed ground and “thorns and thistles” (GEN. 3:17–18). Today we hear and see the many effects of our sin in creation. We read of storms, earthquakes and other disasters. Animals have become extinct, and areas of

creation have become polluted. We confess that we have not treasured or preserved what has been created.

Jesus, the Creator of all, came to be Redeemer of all. We will learn more from these passages about the work of Jesus to “reconcile to himself all things” (V. 20). The Lord of all creation came to humble Himself so that we might be His new creation. The Good News is that through the “blood of his cross” (V. 20), we are brought into a new relationship with Jesus. We will not live in the efforts of a fallen creation forever. Believing in Him, we will rise again and enjoy being part of His kingdom where He will reign forever over all creation.

While we anticipate being part of God's new creation on Jesus' return, we now enjoy living in God's creation. We are now caretakers of His creation. We preserve what the Creator of all has made for us.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we rejoice in the creating power of the Trinity. We give You thanks for all that You have made. We confess that we have not been good caretakers of Your creation. We rejoice that Your Son, the Creator, also became the Redeemer and that through Him we will again see and live in His new creation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Explain the significance of the 40-day Lenten season. Share the significance of our Lenten journey and worship.
- ★ Continue to emphasize the truth of the Genesis creation account. Answers in Genesis and other resources may be helpful.

scripture

Colossians 1:15–20

text

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him” (COL. 1:16).

song

“O Lord, throughout These Forty Days” (LSB 418, OAR 196);
“Let Me Learn of Jesus”
(AGPS 156)

week 30: second week in lent

Jesus Is Image of All

First Things

Bring in a mirror.

What do you see when you look in the mirror? You see yourself (and others). Is the person in the mirror you? The person in the mirror is a reflection of you. The “real” you (the flesh and blood you) is outside the mirror looking at the reflection. The “person” in the mirror is an image of you. An image is a picture or a representation of a person or thing. A photograph of you is an image of you. A statue of a famous person is an image of that person. The word “image” becomes an important expression in today’s lesson.

The Main Thing

We are again exploring the words of Colossians 1:15–20. These words are the theme for our school year and our chapel series. We are looking at sections of this text in the Lenten season, learning more about Jesus who is “all things.” Jesus is “the image of the invisible God.”

God’s Word tells us that “God is spirit” (JOHN 4:24). Today’s passage says God is “invisible.” God is everywhere (note the attributes of God listed in Question 37 in the 2017 edition of *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*). With our limited (and sinful) mind, we cannot comprehend the nature of God.

If God is so big and wonderful and mysterious, how can we know Him and understand Him? Today’s passage gives us the answer. “He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God.” We look at the image in the inspired “mirror” of God’s Word, and we see Jesus. Adam and Eve, who were created in the image of God (GEN. 1:27), ceased to be that image in the fall. They no longer were able to reflect God. We, too, are like a broken mirror in which an image is shattered.

Jesus comes as the perfect image of God. We see the love of God in Jesus. We see God’s desire to restore His people in Jesus. In our human nature, we will never again have the image of God during our lifetime. But through Jesus, who took on our human nature and perfectly displayed the image of God, the image will be restored. In our Baptism, we have put on Christ and have put on His image. Our relationship with God is restored. Later in this letter (COL. 3:10), Paul shares that in Christ (through Baptism), we “have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

Paul encouraged the church and encourages us to show Christ’s image in how we live — “Put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk from your mouth” (COL. 3:8). We, who have been blessed to see and receive the image of Christ, reflect Him. Other people are looking at our “image.” How does your reflection look to your parents, teachers, classmates and friends?

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we are blessed to see You in the image of Your Son. Thank You for sending the real and present Jesus to be our Savior. Help us to continue to see Him clearly in the Word. Thank You for bringing His image to us in our Baptism. Bless us as we reflect Him in all we do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: Explore and explain the attributes of God (Question 37 in the 2017 edition of *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*).
- ★ Research and discuss different artists’ pictures (images) of Jesus.

scripture

Colossians 1:15–20

text

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (COL. 1:15).

songs

“On My Heart Imprint Your Image” (LSB 422, OAR 201); “Keep in Mind, Christ Died for All” (AGPS 149)

week 31: third week in lent

Jesus Is Head Over All

First Things

Select several students and form a line.

When might we form lines at school? (We may line up to go to chapel, recess, lunch, etc. We may line up for various games and activities in the gym or on the playground.)

If you could choose any position in the line, what would be your choice? (Most likely, the choice of most students would be “first in line.” Being first in line gives us the chance to be a leader, to be first at an activity, etc.)

Today’s Bible passage again takes us to Colossians 1. The passage tells us that Jesus is first in all things.

The Main Thing

Sometimes children argue or even push to be first in line. As the teams are chosen, we wave our hands, wanting to be chosen first. Jesus told His disciples that the first should be last (MATT. 20:27). We don’t deserve to be in any of God’s lines, and we certainly don’t deserve to be first.

As we learned last week, Jesus as Creator of all things is the first of all creation. But the Jesus who was first in line as the Son of God in the glory of heaven chose to make Himself last. Jesus chose to come to earth to suffer and die for us. While the payment for all of our sin took place on the cross, the story doesn’t end there. Jesus rose from the dead. The apostle Paul calls Jesus “the firstborn from the dead.” Jesus was the first and only One to conquer death and the devil through His resurrection. While others had risen from the dead by the command of Jesus (e.g., the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus, the young man of Nain), Jesus rose from the dead through the power of His own divine being.

Even though we are in the middle of the Lenten season when we review Jesus’ journey to the cross, we know how the story will end. The crucified and dead Jesus rises again!

Because Jesus rose from the dead, a line is formed following Him. All who believe in Him, His church, will share in His resurrection. The apostle Paul shared a picture of the line in another letter (1 THESS. 4:16-17). When

scripture

Colossians 1:15–20

text

“And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” (COL. 1:18).

songs

“Church of God, Elect and Glorious” (LSB 646, OAR 261); “We Are the Church” (AGPS 252)

Christ returns on the Last Day, He will lead the line; all the believers who have already died and are buried will rise and be part of the line. All of us, baptized into Christ, who are still alive when Jesus comes will also be in His victorious line.

There will be no wondering about who is first. Jesus is first, and we are blessed to be with Him. We give thanks that Jesus is first in line and that, in our Baptism, He places us in His line. We put Jesus first, then others and then ourselves.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, in our sinful pride we think we should always be first. Thank You for sending Jesus, Your firstborn Son, to be “last” and to be the servant who went to the cross for all people. We rejoice in Jesus’ resurrection and the blessings of the resurrection, which make it possible for us to be in His line again and to be with Him forever. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: Review the First and Second Commandments and their explanations; also review the First Petition of the Lord’s Prayer and explanation.

week 32: fourth week in lent

Jesus Is Reconciler of All

First Things

Stage a dispute between two students or two staff members. The chapel leader enters into the dispute and brings peace between the disagreeing parties. Explain to the students that you have “reconciled” the situation. The two disagreeing parties have ceased to argue and now continue as friends or partners.

The Main Thing

Today, we continue our study of the theme text from Colossians 1, where Paul introduces us to Jesus who is creator of all, image of all and head of all (themes from previous weeks). Jesus is also reconciler of all.

In a reconciliation, there has to be two disagreeing parties. There is more than a minor disagreement or disruption between God and man. There is a situation that seems impossible to reconcile. We have the perfect and just God, who makes no errors. There are human beings, who are by nature capable of doing nothing to please God. God rightly judges the sinner by sending a flood, destroying the army of Pharaoh, sending Israel into captivity and showing His righteous anger in many other ways.

We, and all creation, deserve the same judgment. However, God chose to “reconcile to himself all things” (v. 20). God chose to have a relationship with those separated from Him. For a reconciliation to take place, someone has to reach out to desire peace. God reaches out. There is a price to the reconciliation. The price was “the blood of his cross.” The verse immediately following our text shares more about God’s action. “You, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death” (v. 21–22). God has brought us into a relationship with Himself through the saving action of Jesus.

Are there ever any arguments or disagreements between mothers and fathers and other family members, between classmates, friends or staff members? Of course! As God’s reconciled children, we seek to live in peace with Him and with others. Because of Jesus’ sacrifice for us, we make sacrifices to bring an end to

scripture

Colossians 1:15–20

text

“And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (COL. 1:20).

song

“The Lamb” (LSB 547, AGPS 229, OAR 242)

our disagreements with our brothers and sisters, classmates, and others from whom we have been separated. Jesus brings “peace by the blood of his cross” so that we can live in peace with one another.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, You rightly separated Yourself from us. You are holy; we are sinful. Thank You for breaking down the wall of separation and bringing peace through Your Son. Reconciled with You, may we be instruments of peace with those from whom we have been separated. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Review the significance of hearing of God’s forgiveness in the Confession and Absolution of the Divine Service.
- ✦ Catechism study: Review the Eighth Commandment and explanation.

week 33: fifth week in lent

Jesus Is Knitter of All

First Things

Display knitting needles and yarn. Also display some knitted items: hats, scarves, blanket, etc. If possible, have a student, staff member or volunteer demonstrate the art of knitting.

Do you know someone who knits (perhaps a mother, grandmother, etc.)? Knitting is an art. The knitter takes the yarn and skillfully ties it together to make an item of clothing, blanket or other creation.

Today's lesson takes us back to our theme verses from Colossians 1. We celebrate Jesus' work for us and in us. Today's lesson helps us picture Jesus knitting us together into His church.

The Main Thing

Jesus did many skillful things with His hands and fingers. Jesus most likely helped Joseph in the carpenter shop. Jesus touched children, broke bread, and healed blind eyes and deaf ears. Most likely though, Jesus was not into knitting. However, as the Savior of the world and Lord of the church, Jesus knits us into His church. The Bible passage says, "In him all things hold together."

Without Jesus' work, we are like useless pieces of yarn. Like pieces and samples of yarn, we are of different colors, lengths and styles. There is nothing attractive about us or useful about us. Sin separates us from God and from each other.

Through Baptism, God knits us into Himself. We are woven into His death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit knits us together. Paul described the church in 1 Corinthians 12, "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... there are many parts, yet one body" (vv. 13, 20).

God then knits us together into His church. The church is a variety of different people, all saved by Jesus, who

become His beautiful creation. Jesus takes what was separated and disconnected and brings it all together. Just like a knitted piece of clothing or blanket becomes useful, so Jesus' church becomes useful. We are useful to one another and useful in service to others.

The devil would try to unravel God's church. The devil does not want us to be useful in God's kingdom. God keeps us connected as He brings us back to the blessings of our Baptism and keeps us connected with His Word.

As God sees us worshiping together today and each Sunday, He sees His beautiful knit-together creation.

scripture

Colossians 1:15–20

text

"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (COL. 1:17).

song

"Lift High the Cross" (LSB 837, AGPS 162, OAR 308)

In All Things

Heavenly Father, without Your work we are like useless pieces of string. In Jesus, You have artfully brought us together into Your church. Thank You for the beautiful creation called (name of church/school). Keep us connected to You, and help us to share and display Your beauty. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: "What is the Office of the Keys?" (Confession).
- ★ Celebrate God's creative knitting of every human life (PSALM 139:13).
- ★ Invite volunteers to share their knitting and other artistic gifts. What other beautiful gifts and expressions does God give His church in your setting?
- ★ Make church directories available, and note the different people featured as well as the different groups involved in serving in the church.

week 34: palm/passion week

Jesus Is King of All

First Things

Display the clothing (crown, robe, etc.) of a king, or share fictional or real “king” stories.

How do you picture a king? From pictures we have seen or stories we have read, we may picture crowns and robes and other clothing that shows riches or power.

As we follow Jesus this week, from the entrance into Jerusalem to the cross of Calvary, we follow our King who is not dressed in traditional royal clothing.

The Main Thing

Jesus was a king. As Lord and creator of all, Jesus was the King of all creation. As the Son of God, Jesus was a King at the right hand of His Father. There is no more powerful or glorious king than Jesus.

Jesus, the King, came to earth as the baby in Bethlehem, looking like anything but a king. The Wise Men were led by the Spirit to the One promised to be “the king of the Jews.” During His earthly ministry, Jesus’ dress and actions were nothing like those typical of an earthly king. Many saw Him as just another man. Jesus put aside the glory and power of His kingship to come as the Savior.

When Jesus came into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey with children waving palms and shouting words of welcome and praise, He was celebrated to be the “King of Israel.” Jesus came from the family of King David. While many wanted Jesus to be a king that would lead armies and bring power to His people, this King came for another purpose.

Instead of honoring their King, the Passion Week story tells of people mocking their King and finally putting the King on the cross. Jesus did not come to bring

earthly power for Himself or for His people. Jesus came as the King to save His people. The only way to save His people and us was to give Himself as the sacrifice on the cross. Through Jesus’ sacrifice, we are brought into His kingdom. Even though we have also ridiculed Jesus and even crucified Him by our sins, our King gives His life for us so that we can be with Him forever.

As we worship this week, we follow our King from the streets of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the Good Friday cross with the sign “The King of the Jews.” Our King was crucified so that we could be part of His kingdom forever.

In All Things

Heavenly Father, we celebrate this week that our King comes. We rejoice that Your Son, the King from eternity, did not come for earthly power or glory. The King came for the cross. The King came to pay the price for the sins of the world. The King came to make us members of His kingdom. Lead us this week from the praise on the streets of Jerusalem to the “It is finished” cry from the cross. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Throughout the week, share the extended Passion account. Perhaps organize a school “Stations of the Cross” experience.
- ★ Emphasize the Holy Week worship opportunities and the significance of the journey to the cross. Note the titles and themes of “Holy Week” hymns.
- ★ Catechism study: Review the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed and explanation.

scripture

John 12:12–19

text

“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (JOHN 12:13). “They came up to him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and struck him with their hands” (JOHN 19:3). “Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews’” (JOHN 19:19).

songs

“All Glory, Laud, and Honor”
(LSB 442, OAR 208);
“Hosanna, Hallelujah”
(AGPS 121)

week 35: easter

The Resurrection Is ALL!

First Things

Share a collection of Easter “things”: candy, colored eggs, decorations, bonnet or other Easter clothing.

I have a collection of Easter items. Perhaps some of these items were part of your celebration. What’s the most important items in the collection? (Get suggestions from students.) The most important Easter item is not among the “things” of Easter that are displayed here. The most important thing is the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection.

The Main Thing

The Easter “things” can be a distraction from the message of Easter. The “things” are about us and our enjoyment and not about the joy of Jesus.

Our Gospel reading tells us about distracted visitors to Jesus’ tomb. The journey to the tomb in the darkness of early morning had many distractions. The women who visited the tomb were distracted by their grief and sadness. They had seen Jesus dead and buried and were now visiting His grave. They were distracted by the challenge of moving a large stone so they could go in and finish the traditional burial. The women were distracted by a greeting from two men “in dazzling apparel.”

All of their distractions were addressed by the message from the angels, “He is not here, but has risen.” Jesus had told His followers many times that after three days He would rise again. His promise was now fulfilled. Nothing could keep Jesus in the grave. He rose in power over sin, death and the devil.

The truth and power of Jesus’ resurrection is ours in our Baptism. St. Paul writes in Romans 6, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (v. 4).

We are easily distracted at Easter as well as every season and every day. Sometimes we get distracted by things of the world. Sometimes we are distracted by problems in our family, by disease and by other disappointments. Sometimes we are distracted by the sadness of the death of a loved one.

scripture

Luke 24:1–12

text

“The men said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen’” (LUKE 24:5–6).

song

“Jesus Christ Is Risen Today” (LSB 457, AGPS 142, OAR 212)

When we are distracted, we remember The Main Thing. We remember the Easter announcement of the angels telling the women and us that Jesus has risen. He has risen, indeed! Alleluia!

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we confess our distractions even at Easter. Take our eyes to the empty tomb and open our ears to hear the Good News that Jesus is arisen. Thank You for bringing the blessings of the resurrection to us in our Baptism. Bless our Easter worship this season and every week. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ How do some Easter church customs lessen our distractions and take us to Jesus? (Christ candle, white altar cloths, Easter lilies, singing and sharing the “Alleluia!”)
- ✦ Share and sing The Main Thing with favorite Easter hymns.

week 36: second week of easter

All We Need to Know

First Things

Display a variety of theme/topic books: cookbook, history book, mathematics book, etc.

Does this cookbook tell me everything I need to know about cooking and baking? No. It gives me some recipes and information but not every instruction for every dish or setting. Does this history book tell me everything about every historical topic or incident in the history of the world? No. It may give me some of the history of a time or country but not everything. (The same procedure can be used for other books and topics.)

The Main Thing

(Display a Bible.) Does this book tell me everything that Jesus did during His earthly ministry? No. Our Bible reading shares, “Jesus did many other signs ... which are not written in this book.” There would not be enough books to cover all the details of who Jesus is and what He did. The Bible was not written to tell us everything that happened in the history of the world since God created the world. The Bible was not written to tell us every little detail about the life of Jesus. For example, the Bible doesn’t tell us the details of Jesus’ childhood or teenage years growing up in Nazareth. Except for a few incidents after Jesus’ birth, we don’t hear anything about Jesus’ life until He is 30 years old.

Does this book tell us everything we need to know to be saved? YES! Our passage tells us, “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

The Bible tells us about the fall into sin and our need for a Savior. The Bible tells us that we are lost without knowing Jesus. The Bible tells us about Jesus’ perfect fulfillment of God’s promises. The Bible tells us that Jesus came as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. It tells us about His crucifixion and resurrection.

The Bible tells us that we don’t deserve and can’t earn our salvation. But God works faith in our hearts to believe in Jesus, “that by believing you may have life in his name.” Even if we were to read the Bible all day

scripture

John 20:19–31

text

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (JOHN 20:30–31).

song

“I Know That My Redeemer Lives” (LSB 461, AGPS 127, OAR 218)

every day, we can never know or remember every detail of the story of our salvation. Through God’s Spirit, we believe that Jesus died for us and rose again and that we have life eternal in His name. In the meantime, we keep reading and believing what God has written for us in the Bible.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, thank You for the truth of the Bible. We confess there are many details we don’t know and there are many things we forget. However, through the Spirit, You have given us the truth that Jesus is the crucified and risen Lord, and that by believing in Him we have life eternal. Use us to bring Your Words to others so that they, too, may have life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ What is the significance of an Easter “season” in the church? How long does the season last?
- ★ Review the books of the Bible and the organization of the Bible. Review how the Bible came to us.
- ★ The truth and inerrancy of the Bible is supported by Jesus’ fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. List some promises and their fulfillment: born in Bethlehem—Micah 5:2; born of a virgin—Isaiah 7:14; despised and rejected—Isaiah 53; etc.

week 37: third week of easter

Lord of All

First Things

Gather an assortment of pictures for a “Who is it?” game. Pictures may be of people famous in history, athletes, actors or even local people. Show pictures of individuals and ask the assembly, “Who is it?”

God’s Word is never a game, and certainly today’s lesson on one of Jesus’ appearances after His resurrection was not a game for Jesus’ disciples. Once again, the disciples visibly see that Jesus is indeed risen from the dead.

The Main Thing

Jesus did not always immediately reveal Himself to His followers after His resurrection. The disciples, walking to Emmaus (LUKE 24:13–35), walked with Jesus for miles before Jesus revealed Himself to them.

In today’s text, we are told that while some disciples were fishing, Jesus was on the shore, “yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus” (v. 4). When Jesus told the disciples to change their fishing location (“Cast the net on the right side of the boat”) and the net was filled with 153 fish, disciple John (“that disciple whom Jesus loved”) said, “It is the Lord!” (v. 7).

While interacting with Jesus after the miraculous catch and enjoying the fish dinner with Jesus, we are told “they knew it was the Lord.” The disciples did not need to guess or wonder if Jesus was alive. The text tells us that this was Jesus’ third appearance to them after His resurrection. There would be more appearances. The Bible tells us that for 40 days after Jesus’ resurrection, He appeared to His disciples many times. The disciples saw the nail marks in Jesus’ hands and feet. The disciples heard Jesus’ words to them. The disciples saw Jesus’ miracles again.

In our sinful nature, we sometimes fail to recognize or welcome Jesus. God’s Word blesses us again with the Good News of the risen Jesus and places Him among us. We do not have to guess if He is alive. We have the truth of His resurrection from the witness of the disciples. God’s Word allows us to see Jesus. He is our risen Lord!

The most important person to recognize is Jesus. There are many people who still don’t know who Jesus is and what He has done for them. We have the privilege and joy of sharing God’s Word and saying, “It is the Lord.” It is the risen Lord who wants all to believe in Him and to be with Him forever.

All Things in Jesus’ Name

Heavenly Father, we rejoice that the disciples were privileged to see who Jesus was — that He was the risen Lord. Thank You for revealing Jesus to us. Help us to see Him clearly and to joyfully share, “It is the Lord, and it is my risen Lord and Savior.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Learn more about the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus (SEE 1 COR. 15:3–8). Why are these many appearances important?

scripture

John 21:1–14

text

“That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’” (JOHN 21:7). “Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ Now none of the disciples dared ask him, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord” (JOHN 21:12).

songs

“At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing” (LSB 633, AGPS 66); “Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks” (OAR 215)

week 38: fourth week of easter

Shepherd of All

First Things

Collect and display a flock of sheep (various stuffed lambs).

How many of you have collected stuffed animals? How many of you have (or have had) a lamb as part of your collection? (Even adults may have a lamb on a shelf or otherwise displayed.)

Jesus collects lambs. Jesus does not collect stuffed animals. Jesus did not raise a flock of sheep. During the Old Testament and even in Jesus' time, there were many sheep and shepherds. When Jesus talked about sheep, people understood the conversation. Today, we meet the Good Shepherd who includes us in His flock. We are His lambs.

The Main Thing

Jesus' coming as a Shepherd was an Old Testament prophecy. King David, who was also a shepherd, was inspired to share the words of Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd." Prophet Ezekiel told of a perfect Shepherd, "I [will] seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness" (EZEK. 34:12).

Jesus comes as Shepherd. Jesus describes Himself in the Gospel of John with a variety of "I am" statements. In John 10, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd" (vv. 10, 14). Jesus is the Good Shepherd who not only provides for and protects His sheep, but He does even more. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (v. 11).

In the Old Testament, God's people were required to offer sacrifices of repentance and praise. Often the sacrifice included a lamb. Jesus, the Shepherd, took the place of the lamb and offered Himself to pay for the sins

of the world. Only His sacrifice could make the payment for all sins and end forever the sacrifices of lambs.

The Good Shepherd laid down His life for us. We were among the lost and wandering sheep. We seek to go our own way and away from our Shepherd. Jesus' sacrifice makes it possible for us to be among His lambs. The Shepherd has called us in our Baptism and brought us into His flock. We continue to hear His voice in His Word. The Spirit leads us to hear His voice and follow Him.

Our sheep "collections" sometimes grow worn or get forgotten, or we may think we outgrow collecting them. As we grow older, we may forget about or even give up our collection. But Jesus never forgets us. He never looks to get rid of us. We never outgrow our need to be safely in Jesus' flock. We will be part of His "collection" forever. We also pray that other lambs will be found and held by the Good Shepherd.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we rejoice that in Jesus we have the perfect Shepherd. In Jesus, we also have the perfect Lamb who gave His life for the sheep. Thank You for the call of Your voice through the Gospel. Thank You for bringing us into Your flock. Keep and protect us with the flock of Your church forever. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ Read Psalm 23.
- ✦ Read and sing your favorite "Shepherd" hymns.
- ✦ How did Jesus finish His "I am" statements?

scripture

John 10:22-30

text

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (JOHN 10:27-28).

song

"I Am Jesus' Little Lamb" (LSB 740, AGPS 125, OAR 275)

week 39: fifth week of easter

Guide for All

First Things

Display “guide” books: guides/maps for a park or hiking route, a guide for exploring a city/region, a member guide for an organization, or an owner’s guide for car or other purchase. Alternate introduction: Come dressed as a guide (park, tour, museum, etc.).

When have you used a guidebook or been led by a guide? Guides and guidebooks can be very helpful. In today’s lesson, Jesus leaves His disciples and us with a guide.

The Main Thing

Jesus served as a guide to His disciples for three years. Jesus did more than lead them down the streets of small towns as well as the big city of Jerusalem. He had done more than lead them to mountains and seashores and other natural settings. Through His teachings, Jesus led them to the kingdom of God.

In our reading, Jesus is teaching His disciples before He leads them to Jerusalem and to the cross. As they follow Him, they will see Him crucified for their sins and the sins of the world. As they follow Him, they will also see the empty tomb. Jesus will guide them to the reality of His resurrection.

Jesus is also telling His disciples that soon He would be leaving them. We are in the Easter season, journeying toward Jesus’ ascension 40 days after His resurrection. Jesus would ascend into heaven to fill all things and return to the glory of His Father. The disciples would be left alone. Who would guide them?

Jesus shares that the Holy Spirit would be their guide. The Spirit would continue to guide them in the truth of the Word. The Word would continue to teach them of their need for the Savior. The Word would continue to remind them of the saving work of Jesus that they had witnessed. The Word would remind them of the truth of Jesus’ resurrection, which had brought new life and hope to them.

There are many times when we need a guide. It’s nice to have a guide while going down an unknown path or to a new place of exploration. We also need a guide to find our way through life’s challenges. Sometimes we get lost on our sinful paths. Sometimes we get lost in our sadness or madness. Sometimes we don’t know where to turn with our doubts.

scripture

John 16:12–22

text

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (JOHN 16:13–14).

songs

“I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus”
(LSB 729, AGPS 126);
“On Eagles’ Wings”
(OAR 273)

The Holy Spirit has come to us in our Baptism. The Holy Spirit continues to come to us to guide us in the truth of God’s Word. What a blessing it is to have a guide! We continue to read our guidebook, the Bible, and to follow its instructions. We share this guide with others.

All Things in Jesus’ Name

Heavenly Father, when we seek to find our own way, we get lost. Thank You for the work of the Spirit and the guide of Your Word, which takes us again to the pathways of Jesus. Bless us as we continue to follow Him to the cross and out of the tomb. May the Spirit guide us to always faithfully follow on Jesus’ path. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Share the significance of Jesus guiding His disciples in John 13–17.
- ★ Explore the “God’s Word” hymns in our worship “guides.”
- ★ Why is the “Service of the Word” important in our divine worship? To whom does the “Service of the Word” guide us?

week 40: sixth week of easter

All Knowing

First Things

Introduce the students to the leader's "all-knowing" hat of your choice. Have another staff member or student ask seemingly impossible questions (pre-chosen and staged), and share the correct answers. The questions and answers are offered to impress the students with your knowledge and prompt them to inquire, "How did you know that?"

How many points did Michael Jordan score in his career? Answer _____ (or other sports question).

How many miles did Lewis and Clark travel on their expedition? Answer _____ (or other history question).

Where did teacher _____ go to college and when did she graduate? Answer _____ (or other staff question).

Aren't you impressed with my knowledge? With this special hat, I am able to answer almost any question about any topic. Are you convinced of my all-knowing ability?

The Main Thing

Today's Bible reading takes us again to Jesus teaching His disciples. Jesus is with His disciples just hours before He is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and then tried on false charges and eventually crucified. The disciples will soon be left alone without the presence of Jesus. Jesus shares with them again what they need to know.

The disciples confess their belief in Jesus: "Now we know that you know all things." As the Son of God, Jesus was all-knowing (omniscient). Jesus knows every scientific fact. Jesus knows every fact of history. Jesus knows every thought of every person.

Jesus knows everything about us. He knows every action we've ever taken. Jesus knows every thought we have had. Jesus knows our every sin. From the beginning of time, God knew our need for a Savior from our sin. Already in the Upper Room with the disciples, Jesus knew what was going to happen to Him. Jesus knew that the only way to pay for our sin was to die on the cross.

As the disciples listened to Jesus, they knew who He was — "We believe that you came from God." Soon they would know that He was willing to die for them. They would also know that He rose again.

scripture

John 16:23–33

text

"Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God" (JOHN 16:30).

songs

"I Am Content! My Jesus Ever Lives" (LSB 468); "Lord of the Dance" (AGPS 170); "Easter Canon" (OAR 213)

God has given us minds to know. We are blessed to have our school, teachers, pastors and parents who help us to know the most important fact of all. We are God's children who know Jesus, who saved us.

Obviously, my all-knowing hat was only a game. I don't know many things. I do know that Jesus came to be my Savior. I know that He died for me and rose again. God has blessed you to also know about your Savior. May God bless our knowing, believing and serving Him. There are many people who do not know about Jesus. We continue to pray for our pastors, teachers and missionaries who help others to know about our risen Lord and Savior.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, You are all-knowing. Knowing our need for a Savior, You sent the all-knowing and all-loving Jesus. Thank You for the Spirit who helps us to know not only the wonders of the world You created and the facts that we need to live in Your world, but most of all for leading us to know about our Savior. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ It is important to know God's Word. If the school does not have a memory work curriculum, it would be helpful to develop a list of important Scripture verses to know. Perhaps this could be a summer "assignment."

week 4I: seventh week of easter

All One

First Things

Divide a group of students into two groups for a simple game or contest.

Sometimes your teachers divide you into groups. Small groups may work on a project together. Small groups may play a game at recess or do a drill during sports or music practices. Dividing into groups can be a good and fun thing.

Sometimes dividing into groups is not a good thing. One group of students may form a clique and exclude other students. One group in the community or country may have prejudices against another group. Sometimes in the history of our country and the world, one group has gone to war against another group.

The Main Thing

Sin separates us from God and from each other. Sin divided the brothers Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, as well as Joseph and his brothers. Sin divides not only relationships between family members, but also between cultures and countries. The Egyptians held the Israelites in slavery. Sin sometimes divides us even as friends and classmates. Sin even divides us during disagreements in the church.

Jesus knew that after His resurrection and ascension into heaven, the disciples and the church would face divisions. In His Upper Room prayer for them (called the High Priestly Prayer), Jesus prays for His disciples and us. He prays that “they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you” (v. 21) and “that they may be one even as we are one” (v. 22). The relationship between the Father and the Son is a picture of perfect oneness. They are one God. The three Persons are in perfect unity. Their one purpose was to have God and man be one again.

Jesus went from the safety of the Upper Room to be the answer to His prayer. For the disciples and all followers to be one with Him, Jesus had to take away the sin that separated us from Him. As Jesus suffered and died on

Good Friday, the temple curtain was torn in two (MATT. 27:51). There was no longer separation between God and man. The sacrifice was complete and God and man were reconciled. We became one with Him in our Baptism. Jesus keeps us in a relationship with Him as our faith is nurtured.

Being one with God, we seek to live in unity with each other. We celebrate our oneness with Him and each other as we worship in His church. The song “Brothers and Sisters in Christ” (AGPS 78) has the lyric, “And assembled as one in the name of the Son; Lifting hearts, lifting hands, celebrating as friends; And proclaiming the Lord; All our praises afford; We are brothers and sisters in Christ.” We thank God for bringing us together in His group, the church. Celebrating the oneness we have in Christ, we seek to not be part of divisions but to be “one.”

scripture

John 17:20–26

text

“That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (JOHN 17:21).

songs

“With High Delight Let Us Unite” (LSB 483); “Brothers and Sisters in Christ” (AGPS 78); “Now the Green Blade Riseth” (OAR 220)

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, sometimes the groups we choose or have been placed in are signs of separation rather than places of celebration. Thank You for taking down the walls of separation through the sacrifice of Jesus. Thank You for the church, which is a place of worship and oneness. Help us to live in peace and harmony with each other. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ✦ When did Jesus pray? What can we learn about prayer from Jesus?
- ✦ Catechism study: Review the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer.

week 42: day of pentecost

Teacher of All Things

First Things

Show and explain symbols and signs of the Festival of Pentecost: red altar hangings, banners and other church art with the symbol of a dove and flame.

We worship the Holy Spirit (with the Father and Son) every week in our worship together. This week, the church especially notes the presence of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit came in a special event in Jerusalem. (Depending on the age and the students' familiarity with the Pentecost appearance, the events of Acts 2 may be reviewed.)

The Main Thing

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus had gathered with His disciples and had promised that He would send the Holy Spirit. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "the Helper" (v. 26). Jesus explains that the Spirit "will teach you all things" (v. 26). We can call the Holy Spirit our "teacher."

Jesus was also called "Teacher." Jesus taught about the creation of God. Jesus taught about the kingdom of God. While the teachers in our school teach a variety of different subjects and skills, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to teach one topic: who Jesus was and what Jesus has done. The Holy Spirit teaches about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Without the Holy Spirit, it would be impossible to know about Jesus. God's servant Martin Luther explained, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel" (explanation to the Third Article). Sometimes our teachers try to explain a lesson to us, and we just can't understand it. Without the Holy Spirit, we can't understand who Jesus

is and what He has done for us. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand and believe.

The Holy Spirit first came to us in our Baptism and gave us the gift of faith. The Holy Spirit continues to be our teacher and helper. He helps us to believe, and then He helps us live and share our faith in Jesus. With the teaching of the Spirit, we then show our faith in the fruits that the Spirit has given us (GAL. 5:22-23).

At times, we may think that we know a lot about a subject or topic. Sometimes we think we already know a lot about Jesus. No matter how long we have been Christians, how many sermons we have heard or how many religion lessons we have had in our Lutheran school, the Holy Spirit still has many things to teach us. We pray we will always be eager students.

scripture

John 14:23-31

text

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (JOHN 14:26).

song

"Holy Spirit, Light Divine" (LSB 496, AGPS 120, OAR 226)

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we confess that by ourselves we cannot understand You and Your saving work for us. Thank You for the work of the Spirit who has come as our teacher. Help us to be eager students of Jesus' work for us. May the Spirit not only bless our learning but also our living of the Spirit's fruits. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- ★ Catechism study: Review the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed.
- ★ Read (and sing) Pentecost hymns. Look for the different names and gifts of the Spirit.
- ★ Note the symbols of the Holy Spirit and other Persons of the Trinity, the Sacraments, and other liturgical expressions in the Appendix of *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*.

week 43: the holy trinity

All in One

First Things

Display a timeline (based on age and interest of students). Examples could be:

- * Timeline of the school year: first day, Christmas vacation, spring break, last day, etc.
- * Timeline of American history: American Revolution, Civil War, etc.
- * Timeline of church/school history
- * Timeline of family events

Timelines are interesting and helpful. Timelines help us learn and remember history. Timelines help us to remember significant events.

The Main Thing

Share a timeline of Bible history: creation, fall, flood, exodus, Babylonian captivity, birth of Jesus, resurrection, etc. Through our study of God's Word this year, we have reviewed important events in God's story of salvation, especially in the life of Jesus.

If we were to write the word "God" in our timeline, where would we put Him? Everywhere! One of the attributes of God is that He is eternal. God has always been here and always will be. God is beyond and bigger than any human history. God works in history.

This week, the church celebrates Trinity Sunday. We celebrate that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three Persons of the Trinity are beyond time. In today's Bible reading, Jesus and His audience review this history. An important person in their history was Abraham. God had made the promise that the Savior would come into the world through Abraham's family. It was necessary for the Savior to come because Adam's family, Abraham's family and all families since had been affected by sin.

Jesus stuns the audience by saying that He was before Abraham. As a Person of the Trinity, Jesus was present before and at creation. Jesus was part of every event in the history of Abraham and his family. The eternal Jesus is born into the world; He goes to the cross; He rises again from the dead; He ascends into heaven. He will come back again on the Last Day and rule His creation forever.

scripture

John 8:49–59

text

"Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am'" (JOHN 8:58).

song

"Holy, Holy, Holy" (LSB 507, AGPS 119, OAR 229)

The God who was beyond history comes into our history. Our individual timelines include our birth, beginning school and many other events important to us and our family. Also on our timeline is our Baptism. In the name of the Trinity – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – God came into our life. From the time water was poured on our head in the name of the Trinity, the work of Jesus and all the blessings of His journey have been ours. Because God has entered our history, we are promised that our relationship with Him doesn't end at our death. We will be with him eternally.

Our individual timelines continue to be written and completed. We rejoice that God has chosen to be part of our lives. We pray that we might be faithful to Him in all times.

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, we celebrate Your eternal being with the Son and Holy Spirit. We rejoice that Jesus, who was present beyond time, came into the world and subjected Himself to our time and our temptations. We give You thanks that our Baptism brings us to the times and blessings of Jesus and that through Him we will be with You eternally. In Jesus' name, Amen.

More Things

- * What symbols of the Trinity are in your church and school?
- * Review the importance of speaking the creeds together in our worship. Review the Athanasian Creed (LSB, p. 319). What is the history of this creed, and why is it often read on Trinity Sunday?
- * Develop a timeline of the church and school history.

close of school year

In All Things

First Things

Develop a list of possible summer activities: going to camp, family vacations, swimming, sports, playing with friends, hiking, going to the park, reading, vacation Bible school, etc. The students may be part of generating the list.

The Main Thing

After the students assemble the list, ask, “Which summer things will Jesus be a part of?” Sometimes we think or act like Jesus is part of some things but not all things. We certainly want Jesus to be part of our opening devotions and chapel times at school. We may not want Jesus to be part of an argument on the playground or gossip about a classmate or a posting on our phone.

Jesus came to earth to be part of all things. Jesus wasn’t just part of fishing trips with the disciples, conversations in the home of His friends or the miracles showing His power. Jesus was also part of the rejection of the Pharisees and the denial of the disciples. Jesus was part of the journey to the cross and was crucified, died and was buried. Jesus was part of the resurrection from the dead so He could be part of all things eternally. This year, we have heard Colossians 1:15–20 often. God’s Word reminds us that God has “[reconciled] to himself all things ... by the blood of his cross.” Jesus did all things to save us.

Jesus became part of our lives at our Baptism. He has brought us all the blessings of His saving work. He is with us every day in every activity.

Jesus was present in all things during the school year. He was present in... (Share some of the year’s

highlights.) He was present in... (Share some of the challenges of the school year.)

Our Bible passage reminds us that in Jesus, “all things hold together.” God holds us together through His Word and in His church. As we leave school for summer activities, God doesn’t leave us. He encourages us to stay connected with Him through our worship and study of His Word. Whatever we do this summer, and wherever we go, Jesus is with us in all things.

scripture

Colossians 1:15–20

text

“And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (COL. 1:17).

songs

“Earth and All Stars” (LSB 817, AGPS 90); “Shout for Joy, Loud and Long” (OAR 298)

All Things in Jesus' Name

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your presence and blessings of the things of this school year. We rejoice that Jesus has been part of “all things” in our school. As You have been present during the year, we ask Your presence as we leave for summer activities. Whether it is in our world of church, school, family or friends, we ask You to be present in all things as we give glory to You in all times. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

More Things

- * Develop a “thanks” list of the blessings of the school year.
- * Develop a listing of students’ summer schedules/activities and put a picture of or the name of Jesus over the list with the words “In All Things.”
- * Share information with the children and families on summer “faith nurture” opportunities: summer worship schedule, Bible studies, family camps, vacation Bible school, etc.



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