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Preface

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven. (Luther’s Small Catechism, Lord’s Prayer, the Seventh Petition.)

In his foreword, Dr. Dale Meyer reminds us “troubles find us easily and often.” Troubled times prove that God’s Word is not the only powerful word we hear. The devil uses powerful and persuasive words to torment the mind and darken the heart. God’s Word is greater still. He provides those who visit and counsel the suffering members of God’s family with words that silence doubt, fear, loneliness, and guilt. Visitation identifies many of the common situations into which pastors, deaconesses, and even lay visitors are asked to speak that Word of hope and comfort. God’s children turn to the Word of God because our very life depends upon it. Amid all that troubles us, God’s Word puts our temporary sufferings into eternal perspective, giving us hope centered in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Visiting the distressed and the suffering, visiting the sick and the dying, speaking Jesus’ words of healing, comfort, and hope into mean, ugly, and lonely situations is the blessing and challenge of those called to do God’s work. Amid already full schedules, even in the middle of the night, the pastor, deaconess, or caring Christian is challenged to confess the hope that he or she has in Jesus Christ and to speak words of comfort—the very Word of God that rescues us from every evil of body and soul.
Visitation

This little book has a singular focus: Holy Baptism as continuing comfort for the child of God. The essential proclamation that through Baptism we have already died with Jesus and have been given new birth born of water and the Word is the visitors’ message of comfort. The selected Scripture readings, devotions, prayers, and hymn stanzas are ready and useful tools for the visitor. The solid and reassuring message proclaims that, as He once did in Baptism, so, too, does our Lord continue to come to us in all times.

Visitation is carefully designed to put immediately useful resources into the glove compartment, pocket, briefcase, or Communion kit of the visitor. Section I features twenty-eight bedside devotions based on selected psalms. Written in the first person, these brief devotions address a variety of spiritual and emotional topics. Sections II–IV offer targeted resources that can be easily accessed by the visitor to address specific issues. The devotional messages, hymns, prayers, and Scripture texts can be used as they appear, or they can serve the visitor as a way to find appropriate points of contact while composing himself or herself to speak more directly to the situation at hand. Within each section are cross-references, allowing the user to quickly see the whole range of resources available in the book. The final section contains several of the most common orders of service used by those visiting the distressed, the sick, or the dying. The orders are taken directly from Pastoral Care Companion and should integrate well with whatever other resource for visitation ministry that you may choose to use.

May this little book be a blessing as you minister to those waiting for the Father’s rescue.

Scot A. Kinnaman
Commemoration of St. Matthias, 2007
JESUS CHRIST entered our world to release us from the diseases of our souls and to bring in a new creation. Jesus heals His creation by casting out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, and forgiving sin. He does this by the power of His Word that creates what it says. So He rebukes the demon and says, “Be silent and come out of him,” and it happens. He tells the paralytic, “Rise up and take your pallet and go to your home,” and immediately the man is healed. To the widow’s son at Nain, Jesus says, “Young man, I say to you, be raised,” and the dead man sits up and starts speaking. And to the sinful woman at the Pharisees’ Sabbath Seder, He says, “Your sins have been forgiven,” and she departs in peace.

All these things come from Christ’s Word as the Word made flesh. Jesus’ words and His healing testify that already now in Christ, God has invaded His creation and is releasing it from the bondage of its fallenness. This freedom for the captives is real. In Jesus, all creation is undergoing a healing. He comes to bring mercy and compassion through His healing presence. But the world rejects Christ’s healing by rejecting Him. At the cross all sin, sickness, and death is placed on Jesus. The world grows dark and shakes and is re-created. Healing of the whole creation by the blood of Jesus comes only after the Creator dies. Healing comes through pain, suffering, and death. Healing comes through the shedding of Jesus’ blood.

Jesus visited the sick and the suffering to show them the mercy and compassion of God. We now visit the sick and suffering armed with Jesus’ Word, His baptismal invocation and prayer. In our visitations we bring those we visit into communion with Jesus, Creator and Redeemer of the universe.

More than thirteen years ago, I made a comment in class that someday I would like to put together a book of lessons and prayers to assist pastors, deaconesses, and caring Christians in their visitations to the sick and the suffering. Scot Kinnaman was in that class, remembered that statement,
and asked me to co-edit this book with him. Many thanks to him for making this a reality. Without his perseverance and prodding, and his wonderful insight and support, this resource would not have been possible.

I want to thank deaconess students Sara Bielby, Rachel Thompson, and Mary Veith and seminary students Joshua Genig, Gifford Grobien, and Marcus Nelson for their marvelous contributions to the devotions in Section II. I would also like to thank Pamela Boehle-Silva, parish nurse from Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Rocklin, California, for using these devotions in her visits to the sick and the suffering and for offering an honest assessment of their value in providing comfort to those who are oppressed. Finally, many thanks to Cynthia Johnson, the administrative assistant for Kramer Chapel and the deaconess program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, for her help in preparing the several drafts of the manuscript.

May the healing medicine of the Gospel and the Sacraments put to flight the diseases of our souls that with willing hearts we may ever love and serve You.


Arthur A. Just Jr.
Ash Wednesday, 2007
Anger, Bitterness, Self-pity, Turmoil

For additional resources, see Section III, p. 135
For additional prayers, see Section IV, p. 219

Sinned Against

God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day. (Psalm 7:11)

The feeling of anger is our cry for justice. Wrath and fury against injustice burns in the human soul like an unquenchable fire. However, this is but a small taste of the wrath that God has against the sin that has hurt you.

Righteous, healthy anger can drive us to defend what is right. However, it is difficult to follow St. Paul's advice: “Be angry and do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26a). Anger is a ravenous fire that may spread and destroy, especially in the one in whom it burns. Our innate desire for justice is so strong that our anger may cause us to become like those who have sinned against us. To suppress anger is also not good. This only drives the bitter poison deeper and stifles the faith that alone can save. You are a sinful human being who has been sinned against. This should not have happened to you, but it has.

Sometimes you may feel as if there is no escape from the dark, cruel, ugly, diabolical blackness of sin. It is sorely felt; its consequences for you are great. You deserve God’s wrath and judgment, for you are a beggar. You owe the Master a great debt; you are in need of His grace.

Cry out to God in your anger and bitterness. Cry out to the God of justice. Your salvation, even in this, can only be found outside yourself. The greatest injustice occurred on the cross where Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for you (2 Corinthians 5:21). On the cross, Jesus was sinned against by bearing your sin. The righteous wrath of the Father against sin killed Jesus for you. You are His child, whom He has created, whom He loves. Trust Him to avenge you, for He has on the cross. “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). “For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires” (James 1:20).
The oasis of relief for the bitterness of your soul, the only place where justice meets grace and neither is compromised, is the cross of Jesus Christ. God’s wrath is poured out for the grave wrong committed against you, poured out upon His Christ. He has spent it upon His Son for the forgiveness of the whole world. Your sin is washed away in His blood. It is no more. He has paid the price. This is the best possible news for you.

Dwell at the foot of the cross awhile. Know the forgiveness of your sin, the forgiveness of the one who hurt you, the washing away of all sin’s effects upon you. Jesus’ blood makes you clean and whole. It is at the altar, waiting for you in the cup of salvation. Rest in His wounds; by them you are healed.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, in bearing our sins You experienced the full shame of being sinned against. Have mercy on us, as we suffer from the anger and bitterness of the injustices that have been inflicted upon us. Help us to dwell in forgiveness at the foot of Your cross so we might be released from everything that enslaves us, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Anxiety, Apprehension, Fear

For additional resources, see Section III, p. 138
For additional prayers, see Section IV, p. 219

Walking through Fire

But now thus says the LORD, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” (Isaiah 43:1–3a)
“Fear not.” This seems like an unreasonable request from God. To stand in the presence of our Creator and Judge as a broken and sinful creature should invoke the greatest of fear and shame. His holiness is an unquenchable fire, and we are afraid to be burned and consumed.

Yet the Lord God does speak to us, and His first words are not of judgment but of absolution and comfort: “Fear not.” Jesus spoke these words to Peter when he was terrified, as a sinful man, to be in Jesus’ presence. We cannot stand before God because of our own merits and deeds. Although we are sinful and unclean, we can stand without fear before God because He has redeemed us through Christ. He calls us to Himself by name, and our name is “You are Mine.”

We are first called by name in the waters of Holy Baptism. This washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit offers forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. God does not forget the promise He made to us in our Baptism. He remains ever faithful to it. “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.”

We were buried into Christ’s death in our Baptism, but we were also raised to a new life in Him. This new life is not without hurt, trial, or temptation. In fact, our new life is beset with them, and the old fear creeps in on us. But the promise of God is not for only one day. He guides us waking and guards us sleeping every day. Even when we are most vulnerable and unable to act, He does not leave us or forsake us. We walk through fire, but we are not burned. Anxious thoughts and the troubles of the world threaten to overwhelm us, but they cannot! It is not our own strength that quenches the fiery arrows of the devil. It is the promise and presence of God, who on the cross defeated the devil. Our own strength will fail, but He never will. God is with us. Amen.

Prayer

Our Father in heaven, You have redeemed us with the holy, precious blood of Your Son. You have reconciled us to
You in the waters of Holy Baptism. Guide and keep us in our lives as we meet trial and temptation. Strengthen our faith, that we may ever be mindful that You have called us by name and that we are Yours, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

GUILT

For additional resources, see Section III, p. 142
For additional prayers, see Section IV, p. 220

The Way of the Lord

Remember Your mercy, O LORD, and Your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to Your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of Your goodness, O LORD! Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He instructs sinners in the way.

(Psalm 25:6–8)

The Lord is good. He sees your need, your pain, and all your troubles. He provides for you even when you sin and turn away from Him. He remains constant in His mercy and goodness.

The Lord’s way is clear, but because of your rebellious ways, you are always bearing the fruit of brokenness, shame, and death. You know you have sinned against God; your conscience tells you that you are guilty before Him.

Even when the way of rebellion enters creation, the Lord still reigns in His kingdom. He has not changed. His great love and mercy remain from the beginning. You may never forget your sins and your guilt, but God remembers not the sins of your youth or your rebellious ways. Scripture says, “God will not take away life, and He devises means so that the banished one will not remain an outcast” (2 Samuel 14:14b).

The way of the Lord is through His Son, Jesus Christ, who went the way of the cross to forgive your sin and remove your guilt. Jesus entered our world to free you from sin’s slavery. Instead of your sin and shame, God remembers
the sacrifice of His Son on the cross as in Baptism He clothes you with His righteousness. When you feel guilt over sin, it is the Holy Spirit convicting you of sin. When you hunger and thirst for forgiveness, it is the Holy Spirit pointing you to Christ. The Holy Spirit cuts through your guilt and shame to give you trust in Christ alone.

The Lord’s goodness can overcome any amount of evil. No sin is small enough to escape His attention, and no sin will ever be too large to be forgiven. God incarnate already bore every punishment; Jesus on the cross is always bigger than your sin.

The Lord’s ways are not humankind’s ways; therefore, the Lord instructs sinners in the love and mercy of Christ. His ways are the means of grace—Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper. The Lord works through His Word and Sacraments to breathe His own life into us. The Lord even shares His own glory with us! He binds the wounds of the wounded with His attentive care and His constant Word. He frees us from sin to give us new life and freedom in His Son!

Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, You do not desire the death of sinners, but rather that we turn from our evil ways and live. Although we deserve only Your wrath, we flee to Your mercy in Christ Jesus, who gave His body and His blood for our redemption. Grant that we may ever Thus believe and never waver. Grant that in such faith we stand worthy before Your altar and Your throne. Strengthen us through Your means, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Impatience, Boredom, Restlessness

For additional resources, see Section III, p. 147
For additional prayers, see Section IV, p. 221

Forgetting Boredom and Remembering Life

Let my cry come before You, O LORD; give me understanding according to Your word! Let my plea come
before You; deliver me according to Your word. . . . Let my soul live and praise You, and let Your rules help me. (Psalm 119:169–170, 175)

Every day is the same. We wake, eat, and sleep. Sometimes it seems that the only disturbance is the constant dripping of the bathroom faucet. “God, how long will this take? God, do You expect me to sit here forever?” We are impatient; we want to get on with our life. Our boredom and restlessness get the best of us.

Many times God calls upon us to do the impossible: Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Pray continually. Ask this mountain to fall into the sea and it will. But sit here and wait? This seems impossible. Perhaps we do not see things according to the way God sees them. Trust God even in the face of deathly boredom? In our sin, we may have forgotten how to be interested in life and to be satisfied with so little. We forget the world was created as a gift for us to enjoy. Our lives of waking and sleeping are so consumed by the constant drip of boredom we forget the gift of life.

Our culture encourages boredom and restlessness, and we fail to see life as rich and wide. Everything appears to be out of reach. You may feel that you have wasted your life and missed opportunities. And you can’t go back. All you are given is the present, so you must let go of those memories and see that God promised you more than you could possibly imagine. He promised you joy, even in the midst of suffering, even in the midst of boredom, impatience, and restlessness.

It is ironic that we often get restless when we have the least control. We think if we can get out of a certain situation, we will take back control over our lives and know peace. It is a scary thing to let go and just be—to have nowhere to go, no one to see, no purpose in life. Opening yourself to the truth in these moments is frightening. But letting go of the illusion of control reveals the mysterious promises of God.

In letting go, the silence may be deafening. But then, through the voice of Jesus in His Gospel, the Holy Spirit
whispers in your ear words that give you understanding. Only in His quiet voice does the world make sense. Only now are you able to see the cosmos in the midst of the chaos and know that God’s presence orders all things according to His will. His Word delivers you, transforming your impatience into patience, your boredom into joy, your restlessness into satisfaction. Now your soul patiently waits to hear from God, joyfully praising His name and remembering what you once forgot—that all things work for the good of those who are called according to His purpose.

Prayer

O Son of God, You patiently endured the pain and suffering of the crucifixion. Give to us Your patience so we may praise You even in our trials and travails, and raise us up on the Last Day. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Addiction

Incorruptibility

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

At the present time, all that appears to be living in you is that which you are addicted to. It has dominion over you, body and mind. It has broken you, corrupted your whole being, and you want freedom from this terrible burden. You may think that the only thing living in you is the substance of your addiction, but Paul tells you otherwise and speaks what appears to be foolish words: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

Although this life of addiction overwhelms you, Christ is still living in you. Even in the midst of this addiction, you
are the Lord’s. You belong to Him. You are baptized. When your body was drenched with the water of the font, Jesus laid claim to you, and nothing, not even this addiction, will steal you away from Him.

No matter how much you crave what you are addicted to, Jesus loves you more. He loves you so very much that He has not only laid claim to you, but He has defined you anew, made you anew, and continues to define and make you anew when He joins you to His holy body and precious blood. You cannot overcome your addiction by your own efforts. Only in Christ are you able to do this. His body and blood do not merely wage war against your addiction, but His body and blood are the means by which your addiction may be overcome, even if the craving never goes away. When He enters your mouth in the Holy Supper, He enters you to rule and care for your whole being.

When Jesus died on the cross, He who knew no sin became sin for us. He took on even our most hideous addictions. In His victorious resurrection, Jesus demonstrated that He is utterly incorruptible. Sin, death, and, yes, even addiction, did not have their hold on Him. When you eat and drink His body and blood, you become one with His incorruptible flesh. The crucified and resurrected Lord is joined to you in this tangible and substantial way. He now gives to you everything that belongs to Him in this sacred meal, including His incorruptibility.

Although your addiction may harm you and even may appear to be destroying you, you need not fear. Rather, focus on what Jesus did as He was suffering, and put your trust in the God of all comfort and consolation. You are joined to Him—body, blood, soul, and divinity—and in Him you are incorruptible, just as He is incorruptible.

You may not feel that way now—perhaps you never will. But your feelings of despair over your addiction will not change this reality. The final outcome of your broken life will be the same as that of the crucified Christ Jesus—a life of joy, freedom, forgiveness, hope, and incorruptibility is yours in Him unto life everlasting.
Prayer

O almighty God, merciful Father, who in love has joined us to the precious body of Your Son, Jesus Christ, in the water of Holy Baptism, grant that we find peace and comfort in being incorruptible, even as He is incorruptible; through the same, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

LONELINESS

For additional resources, see Section III, p. 153
For additional prayers, see Section IV, p. 223

The Groaning of the Spirit

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (Romans 8:26)

Your body is in bondage to decay. This is declared to you each day, sometimes softly in a bruise, sometimes loudly in terminal illness. Even with your best efforts, the marks of imperfection that your body bears cannot be ignored, and you are weak. Not only your body, but your whole self is also caught in decay. Relationships falter and are broken by sin. You feel abandoned by friends and family, and your spirit groans within you.

But you are not alone. Jesus cried out in a loud voice from the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46). He was forsaken by the Father that you may be reconciled to Him. In Jesus’ forsakenness is your forgiveness. Never again do you walk through life alone. In Baptism, the Holy Spirit was given to you. When you feel alone, even when you are so overwhelmed with loneliness that you cannot pray, the Spirit intercedes for you with groanings too deep for words. Not only does the Spirit groan for you, but all of creation also groans with you! “For
we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Romans 8:22). We do not bear the sufferings of this present time alone. All of creation helps to bear up our suffering, and God continually abides with us through His Son. In Him we wait for the glory that is to be revealed to you.

Prayer

Almighty God, grant that those who live alone may not be lonely but find fulfillment in loving You and their neighbors as they follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (LW Agenda, p. 370)

Tears in His Bottle

You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book? (Psalm 56:8)

How long, O Lord? Why do You leave me here alone? For what purpose? When will someone come?

Our Lord created you to long for, and to be for, someone else. Most of all, He created you for a relationship with Himself. That is why He made a way to come close to you in Christ.

It cost the Lord dearly to come for you. He left the Father and felt that separation so sharply that He often withdrew “to desolate places” and prayed (Luke 5:16). There was no place more lonely than the cross. Others hurling insults, His friends scattered and gone, Jesus bore all sin and its ugly consequences. Even the Father was pouring out the bitter cup of wrath on Him: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Do you feel as if Christ has forsaken you? You taste a drop of His loneliness now. In this, draw close to Him. Take heart: the separation is not forever, but His kingdom is eternal. God’s kingdom is now, in the person of Jesus. By His wounds you are healed.

It is your purpose to be loved by Him and to love in
return. No situation of life can prevent your communion with Him. In Jesus’ body and blood, even your thinking and feeling do not inhibit it, but He comes to you in the simplest and most significant of ways—eating and drinking—into your very person.

You are not forgotten. He keeps all your tears. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Prayer

Almighty God, merciful Father, by Word and Sacrament You have created Your Church in this world to be a godly communion and family. Grant Your blessing to those who dwell in loneliness that they may find a place of solace and pleasant fellowship among people faithful to You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (LW Agenda, pp. 369–70)

OLD AGE

For additional resources, see Section III, p. 156
For additional prayers, see Section IV, p. 223

Growing Old in Christ

O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!

. . . And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You. . . . Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears! For I am a sojourner with You, a guest, like all my fathers.

(Psalm 39:4, 7, 12)

Someone once said, “We are all terminal.” That is true. We are born to die. That is our end, our destiny. None of us know when that will be or how it will happen. All we can do is pray: “O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!” The elderly understand this, for in our old age we are aware of the frailty of life.

People who grow old understand David’s prayer in
Psalm 39. As bodies grow weak and minds become feeble, we become obsessed with ourselves, our aging. It is hard for us to think of anything else, for our bodily aches and pains, our growing old, becomes our main focus. As a result, we have no peace, for we are at war with ourselves, with our growing old.

Only the Lord is able to help you turn away from yourself to Him and to your neighbor. Only Christ is your hope. So you wait on Him and pray with David: “Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears!” You need the peace that only Jesus can give, especially when you give way to tears. For the way is treacherous, even as you grow old, especially as you grow old. And He has gone that way for you, all the way to a cross where He conquered death by His death and showed you in His resurrected body what you shall one day be and what you already are now.

Like the Lord, you are a stranger in this world as you make your pilgrimage from life to death. Just as He did not travel alone to Jerusalem but was accompanied by the Spirit of the Father, so you also do not journey alone but with Him, by His Spirit, and with all the saints who have gone before you in the faith. To grow old in Christ is to grow old in His Church, fed by Him along the way by His life-giving words and His salutary body and blood in the Supper He has prepared for you.

Growing old is not for the faint of heart. It is a form of suffering, for you see how this frail body is broken down by the wear and tear of the years. But if your journey is in Christ, if you are growing old in Christ, those marks of age are marks of His honor and His wisdom. As you make your way to the heavenly Jerusalem, your advancing age reminds you that the life you now lead in Christ will continue in Christ forever and ever.

Prayer

Almighty God and gracious Father, in Your mercy look on all whose increasing years bring them weakness, anxiety,
Anger, Bitterness, Self-pity, Turmoil

For devotions suitable for this topic, see Section II, p. 41

Anger is neither to run rampant nor to be suppressed. Those who are angry should be encouraged to cry out to the God of justice and to leave vengeance in His hands. In the cross is found the satisfaction of justice in the wrath of God against sin poured out on Christ. In the cross is found the mercy and forgiveness of God who, in His Son, has atoned for the sins of the whole world.

Psalmody

PSALM 7:6–17

Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;
lift Yourself up against the fury of my enemies;
awake for me; You have appointed a judgment.
Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about You;
over it return on high.

The LORD judges the peoples;
judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness
and according to the integrity that is in me.
Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
and may You establish the righteous—
You who test the minds and hearts,
O righteous God!
My shield is with God,
who saves the upright in heart.
God is a righteous judge,
and a God who feels indignation every day.
If a man does not repent, God will whet His sword;
He has bent and readied His bow;
He has prepared for Him His deadly weapons,
making His arrows fiery shafts.
Behold, the wicked man conceives evil
and is pregnant with mischief
and gives birth to lies.
He makes a pit, digging it out, 
and falls into the hole that he has made. 
His mischief returns upon his own head, 
and on his own skull his violence descends.

I will give to the LORD the thanks 
due to His righteousness, 
and I will sing praise to the 
name of the LORD, the Most High.

Additional Psalms

30; 39; 73; 88; 94; 119:81–88; 139

Readings

ECCLESIASTES 7:9

Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.

MATTHEW 18:21–35

Then Peter came up and said to Him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their
master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also My heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

**EPHESIANS 4:26–27**

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

**Additional Readings**

Isaiah 53; Matthew 26:36–46; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7; Ephesians 6:10–17; Philippians 2:5–11; Hebrews 10:28–39; James 1:12–21; 1 Peter 5:6–11

**Prayers**

O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 581)

Most merciful Father, with compassion You hear the cries of Your people in great distress. Be with all who now endure affliction and calamity, bless the work of those who bring rescue and relief, and enable us to aid and comfort those who are suffering that they may find renewed hope and purpose; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 993)

For additional prayers, see Section IV, p. 219

**Hymnody**

Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
See Him dying on the tree!
’Tis the Christ, by man rejected;
Yes, my soul, 'tis He, 'tis He!
'Tis the long-expected Prophet,
David's Son, yet David's Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it:
'Tis the true and faithful Word.

Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would intervene to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that justice gave.

Ye who think of sin but lightly
Nor suppose the evil great
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the sacrifice appointed,
See who bears the awful load;
'Tis the Word, the Lord's anointed,
Son of Man and Son of God.

("Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted," LSB 451:1–3)

Additional Hymns

“I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus” (LSB 729); “If God Himself Be for Me” (LSB 724)

Anxiety, Apprehension, Fear

For devotions suitable for this topic, see Section II, p. 42

When Jesus said to Peter, “Peace be with you,” He was pronouncing absolution upon him (John 20:19). Jesus dwells within us, and we dwell within Him, so there is no reason for anxiety, apprehension, or fear. Yet sometimes the concerns of this world overwhelm us, and we cannot help but become anxious. The
living words of Jesus in Holy Scripture continually proclaim to us: “Peace be with you.”

Psalmody

PSALM 46

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear
    though the earth gives way,
    though the mountains be
    moved into the heart of the sea,
    though its waters roar and foam,
    though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
    God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
    He utters His voice, the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
    the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Come, behold the works of the LORD,
    how He has brought desolations on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
    He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
    He burns the chariots with fire.
“Be still, and know that I am God.
    I will be exalted among the nations,
    I will be exalted in the earth!”
The LORD of hosts is with us;
    the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Additional Psalms

4; 91; 121

Readings

JOHN 10:1–18

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the
sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them.

So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father.”

ROMANS 8:31–35, 37–39

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to con-
demn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? . . .

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Additional Readings**

Isaiah 43:1–3a; Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:4–7

**Prayers**

Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrod, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, You are always more ready to hear than we to pray and always ready to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour down on us the abundance of Your mercy; forgive us those things of which our conscience is afraid; and give us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask except by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 832)

_For additional prayers, see Section IV, p. 219_

**Hymnody**

Be of good cheer; your cause belongs
To Him who can avenge your wrongs;
Leave it to Him, our Lord.
Though hidden yet from mortal eyes,
His Gideon shall for you arise,
Uphold you and His Word.
As true as God’s own Word is true,
Not earth nor hell’s satanic crew
Against us shall prevail.
Their might? A joke, a mere facade!
God is with us and we with God—
Our vict’ry cannot fail.

Amen, Lord Jesus, grant our prayer;
Great Captain, now Thine arm make bare,
Fight for us once again!
So shall Thy saints and martyrs raise
A mighty chorus to Thy praise
Forevermore. Amen.
(“O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe,” LSB 666:2–4)

Additional Hymn
“Have No Fear, Little Flock” (LSB 735)

Guilt

Guilt is a healthy response to our own sin and its consequences. But guilt can so consume us that we forget that in Christ and His atoning sacrifice we are innocent of all charges against us. We are forgiven and set free from the pangs of guilt through the blood of Jesus.

Psalmody

Psalm 51
Have mercy on me, O God,
according to Your steadfast love;
according to Your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
Anger, Bitterness, Self-pity, Turmoil

For additional resources, see Section III, p. 135
For devotions suitable for this topic, see Section II, p. 41

Gracious God, our heavenly Father, Your mercy attends us all our days. Be our strength and support amid the wearisome changes of this world, and at life’s end grant us Your promised rest and the full joys of Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (LSB Altar Book, p. 623)

Gracious God, You gave Your Son into the hands of sinful men who killed Him. Forgive us when we reject Your unfailing love, and grant us the fullness of Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (LSB Altar Book, p. 639)

Lord, Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd, without whom nothing is secure. Rescue and preserve us that we may not be lost forever but follow You, rejoicing in the way that leads to eternal life; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (LSB Altar Book, p. 825)

Anxiety, Apprehension, Fear

For additional resources, see Section III, p. 138
For devotions suitable for this topic, see Section II, p. 42

Merciful and everlasting God, You did not spare Your only Son but delivered Him up for us all to bear our sins on the cross. Grant that our hearts may be so fixed with steadfast faith in Him that we fear not the power of sin, death, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (LSB Altar Book, p. 589)
Almighty and most merciful God, preserve us from all harm and danger that we, being ready in both body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish what You want done; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 630)

Almighty and everlasting Father, You give Your children many blessings even though we are undeserving. In every trial and temptation grant us steadfast confidence in Your loving-kindness and mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 631)

O Lord, grant us wisdom to recognize the treasures You have stored up for us in heaven, that we may never despair but always rejoice and be thankful for the riches of Your grace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 818)

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**GUILT**

*For additional resources, see Section III, p. 142  
For devotions suitable for this topic, see Section II, p. 44*

O Lord, absolve Your people from their guilt that from the bonds of our sins, which by reason of our frailty we have brought upon ourselves, we may be delivered by Your bountiful goodness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Adapted from *LSB Altar Book*, p. 936)

Lord of all power and might, author and giver of all good things, graft into our hearts the love of Your name and nourish us with all goodness that we may love and serve our
neighbor; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (LSB Altar Book, p. 812)

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**Impatience, Boredom, Restlessness**

*For additional resources, see Section III, p. 147*

*For devotions suitable for this topic, see Section II, p. 45*

Lord Jesus Christ, our support and defense in every need, continue to preserve Your Church in safety, govern her by Your goodness, and bless her with Your peace; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (LSB Altar Book, p. 730)

O Lord of grace and mercy, teach us by Your Holy Spirit to follow the example of Your Son in true humility, that we may withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds avoid ungodly pride; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (LSB Altar Book, p. 823)

Heavenly Father, who sent His Son to help all of Abraham’s children, to be their life and praise, give to us that life of Your Son so that our soul may live forever with You, praising Your name, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, who joyfully created us, stir up in us that same joy of life so that we may reflect Your glory even in times of restlessness, through Jesus Christ, who lives with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.