

Everyday FAITH Family Page

New Testament 4

Law/Gospel

I sin when I ignore my own sinfulness and focus on the sinfulness of others, rejecting them because of it. **Christ's blood covers not only my sins but also the sins of every sinner, no strings attached.**

Bible Words

[Jesus] came to seek and to save the lost. Luke 19:10

Fun Facts

Tax collectors in Jesus' day were hated for many reasons.

For one thing, they were often dishonest and took more than their fair share of the money.

Also, they worked for the Roman government, a foreign power that the Jewish people resented. Tax collectors were seen as working for the enemy.

Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, would be seen as the lowest of the low. And yet, Jesus forgave him! And He forgives you too.

From the Catechism The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

Jesus and Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1–10

Jesus is on the last leg of His journey to Jerusalem as He passes through Jericho. It is a few days before Palm Sunday (Luke 19:28–40). Having already extended mercy to a blind beggar, a resident of Jericho (18:35–43), Jesus now runs into another resident of Jericho in need of mercy—Zacchaeus. Since Zacchaeus was rich and a chief among the tax collectors (19:2), he was the object of particular spite, shunned as a “sinner” (v. 7).

Wee Little Man

Thanks to the well-known ditty about this “wee little man,” Zacchaeus has often been portrayed as a sort of patron saint of the height challenged. But this is to miss the point. Short though he was, mammoth were his sins. If he is the patron saint of anyone, it is of those who become rich by sucking the lifeblood out of others.

So when Jesus invited Zacchaeus to come from his sycamore perch and serve Him supper, “all grumbled,” saying, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner” (v. 7). This is as much, or more, an indictment of Jesus as of the tax collector. “How dare He even speak to such filth, much less invite Himself over for a meal with that scoundrel!” the people scowled. If they wanted Jesus to do anything with Zacchaeus, it was to yank a switch from that sycamore tree and publicly whip him for his greed!

Perhaps because he overheard the grumbling and was moved by repentance and faith, this infamous sinner announced, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold” (v. 8). Salvation came to this man not because of his bigheartedness but because of his faith in Jesus, which was evidenced in this giving away of wealth. He is among the “lost” whom the Son of Man seeks, as are we, who are forgiven and called to forgive those who sin against us, no matter how Zacchaeus-like their sins may be.

Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for giving us all we need. Forgive us when we are ungrateful and greedy. Help us to take care of others who are in need. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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Sin brought death into the world for me and all people. **Jesus, the perfect Son of God, came to be my Savior and King, dying in my place and rising three days later to save me from sin and give me new life in His kingdom.**

Bible Words

He [Jesus] answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." Luke 19:40

The Big Picture

Jesus, God's Son, rode into Jerusalem to give us righteousness, salvation, and forgiveness of sins. A large group of disciples walked with Jesus, including many children. They believed Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament messianic prophecies, and they praised God for the great works they saw Him do (Luke 19:37). John adds that at least some of them had witnessed Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17-18). The disciples shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9). *Hosanna* means "Save us now." Spreading garments and palm branches shows honor, respect, and reverence.

The Triumphal Entry

Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-40

At Jesus' Baptism, God declared Him to be the bearer of the sins of the whole world. For three years, He preached, taught, and worked miracles to show the people that the Old Testament promise of the Messiah had come true. Now, in the last week of His earthly ministry, Jesus "set His face to go to Jerusalem" on His way to the cross (Luke 9:51).

Jesus entered Jerusalem from a small town near the Mount of Olives called Bethphage. It was a town near Bethany, where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived.

Jesus did not come into this world to sit on an earthly throne and rule over an earthly kingdom. He did not ride into King David's city to restore King David's earthly kingdom. Jesus' kingdom is not of this world.

Instead, Jesus entered upon a donkey and was followed by a multitude that included the poor, the destitute, and even children. They were people who had been waiting to be rescued from their sins. Many in the crowd believed the Old Testament prophecies that the Messiah would be David's son and would come to them humble, riding on a donkey, as the prophet Zechariah had written, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (9:9).

Animals that had not yet been used were especially appropriate for holy purposes. Jesus was not coming with the riches of an earthly king. No, He rode into Jerusalem with the accolades of a messianic, heavenly king, coming to give the people righteousness and salvation, forgiveness from their sins.

Prayer

King of kings, prepare in our hearts a welcome fit for You. Keep our eyes on You, that we can rejoice in our Savior and King. In Your name we pray. Amen.

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I do not always obey God's demand that I love Him with all my heart. I am not willing to give Him all that I have. **Christ loves me and willingly redeemed me, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death that I might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him.**

Bible Words

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Deuteronomy 6:5

Fun Facts

Coins provide a snapshot of the history and values of a country. Most New Testament coins came from the Roman government. The most common was the silver denarius, which bore the likeness of Tiberius Caesar. One denarius bought twelve loaves of bread; four purchased a lamb.

The Widow's Offering

Mark 12:41-44

The widow shows what it means to be part of the kingdom of heaven, that is, to live by faith as God's child. When she in her poverty contributed her "two small copper coins," she "put in everything she had, all she had to live on" (vv. 42, 44). She didn't give in fractions, divvying up a little for God, a little for her, and a little for whatever struck her fancy. She gave all. And in that, she is a model for us all. The point is not that we, too, should give all our money to the church. The point is that we should give our all to God—all our love, our devotion, our minds, our everything.

The kingdom of God is not static, but dynamic. It is Jesus' work for us: Jesus in action in the lives of His people. It is often hidden in the smallest of things: in those two tiny coins, given by faith; in the splash of water on the head of a sinner over the font; in the quarter-size piece of bread placed on the communicant's tongue; in the naked King of kings robed only in His own blood on the cross. The drops of His blood, of greater worth than all gold and silver, fall into heaven's treasury. And when His blood in that coffer rings, the angels in heaven sing, "Glory to God in the highest" for He earns peace for His people on earth.

Sing

Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.
LSB 783:5

It Is Thine Own

Talk about offerings. Why do we give offerings at church and Sunday School? Where does the money go? Consider designating a special offering to a particular group each month, decided by the family.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us all we need. Help us to see where we can help others with all You've given us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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I betray my Lord when I sin.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. With His very body and blood, He grants me forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Bible Words

Jesus took bread . . . and He took a cup. Matthew 26:26–27

Fun Facts

Jesus and His disciples did not sit in tall chairs for the meal, as we might imagine. It was common at the time to lie on one’s left side during special meals.

From the Catechism

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.

The Lord’s Supper

Luke 22:1–23

Luke is the only Gospel writer to mention two cups in his account of the Lord’s Supper, one before the distribution of bread and one after (22:17, 20). This reflects Luke’s more detailed account of the way the Passover meal was likely observed.

The more significant cup is the second one, which is mentioned also by the other evangelists and which Jesus refers to as “the new covenant in My blood” (v. 20). In light of the original Passover story (Exodus 12), one sees that this new meal involves the blood of Jesus as the once-for-all Passover Lamb. And it is a meal of a “new” covenant of grace and mercy sealed once for all by the death and resurrection of God’s Son for the life of the world.

It is critical to emphasize the word *is*, which occurs twice in these verses: “This is My body” (v. 19); “This cup . . . is the new covenant in My blood” (v. 20). Though it is a mystery how this can be, we believe the clear word of Scripture that the word *is* truly means “is” and that the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper do not represent the body and blood of Jesus, but they truly are that body and blood.

Sing

What higher gift can we inherit?
It is faith’s bond and solid base;
It is the strength of heart and spirit,
The covenant of hope and grace.
Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood
Be for my soul the highest good!
LSB 618:5

Prayer

Lord God, You make a new promise to us in Jesus, Your Son. Thank You for the forgiveness You give us because of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. In His name we pray. Amen.



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I deny Jesus when I fail to acknowledge Him and live as if I do not know Him. **Even when I deny Him, Jesus will never turn His back on me, never refuse me, and never stop loving me. Instead, He draws me back, forgives me, and treats me as if I had never denied Him.**

Bible Words

If we are faithless, [Jesus] remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself. 2 Timothy 2:13

The Big Picture

One reason why Peter was recognized in the courtyard during Jesus' trial was his dialect. Peter was not from Jerusalem, and he spoke differently from those who were. His Galilean accent set him apart from others waiting at the fire.

Peter wasn't the only visitor that week, however. Thousands of people had come to Jerusalem that week to commemorate the Passover. Little did these crowds know that this Passover would be special. The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, was about to be sacrificed for all sinners. Thousands would be in the city for this world-altering moment.

Peter Denies Jesus

Mark 14:26–72

It is Holy Thursday (also called Maundy Thursday). Having instituted the Lord's Supper, Jesus leads His disciples to the Mount of Olives, a familiar place to them. There, Peter refuses to believe what Jesus predicts: that he, along with the rest of the apostolic band, will desert and deny their Master. A few hours later, however, after Jesus is arrested and while He's being tried in the court of the Jews, Peter denies his Lord three times. Luke adds a detail skipped by the other evangelists, that at the third denial, "the Lord turned and looked at Peter" (22:61), calling to mind the prediction that Peter had fulfilled by his infidelity.

Our own denials of Jesus may not be as dramatic, but they are just as real. Whether by speaking or by keeping silent when we ought to speak up, we have all chosen love of self over love of Savior. We have denied our Lord and His gifts for the sake of reputation or some other selfish gain. And the rooster's crow has called us all to repentance.

Jesus, however, never denies us. He forgives Peter's threefold denial and welcomes Him back with His threefold question: "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" (John 21:15–17). Even if we are faithless, He remains faithful. He cannot deny us because we are part of Him, baptized members of His Body.

From the Catechism

The Sixth Petition

And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean? God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

Prayer

Lord, Even when we are faithless, You are faithful. Forgive us when we fail. Thank You for never denying us. In Your name we pray. Amen.

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The wages of sin is death. **Jesus Christ paid the price for the sin of the world by His suffering and death.**

Bible Words

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
John 1:29

Fun Facts

The word *passion* takes on many meanings. Some think of love; some think of anger. But the meaning for *passion* in this lesson involves suffering. When we speak of Jesus' passion, we are talking about everything that Jesus endured between the Lord's Supper and His death. That was a long time to suffer! Jesus bore it all in love so that we would not have to.

The Passion of Christ

Matthew 27:11–66

Righteousness is an important concept throughout Matthew's Gospel. Jesus begins His ministry by being baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). He calls people to be perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect (5:48). In His Passion, Jesus completes what He began at His Baptism: fulfilling all righteousness, which we could not do. We can see the importance of the Passion in the length and detail of Matthew's account (26:36–27:66). The tension of how sinners can be made righteous climaxes in this suffering of Christ and is resolved in Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Although Jesus is condemned for blasphemy, He is the one man who can truly claim to be God. Thus, He is falsely accused, while around Him other men go unpunished for betrayal (26:47–50), denial (26:69–75), false testimony (26:59–61), envy (27:18), cowardice (27:24), mockery (27:39–44), and murder (27:26, 35).

In the same way, Jesus is falsely accused for our crimes, but He takes our punishment in love so that we may walk away completely free. The Father forsakes Jesus—an event that is incomprehensible to us—so that the sin of the whole world is punished by the perfect, righteous judge of the universe through the perfect, righteous sacrifice, Jesus Christ.

Like the centurion, we see at the cross who Christ really is: the Righteous One who makes us righteous (27:54). For His sake, God does not hold our sins against us; neither does He maintain His demands forever upon us. God takes up our sins, demands, burdens, and sufferings so that, forgiven and clean, we rise to new life.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son to take on our sin and give us instead His righteousness. Keep us in Your Spirit, that we can come to Your throne with certainty that Jesus' righteousness is now our own. In His name we pray. Amen.

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Because of sin, I deserve eternal death and separation from God, and I am filled with fear. **The Father has accepted His Son's sacrifice for sin, making me an heir of eternal life. He works through His Word to comfort me, replacing my fear with joy and empowering me to tell others about the Lord's resurrection.**

Bible Words

[God] has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Peter 1:3

Fun Facts

This account of the resurrection records an earthquake occurring on Easter morning. There was also an earthquake on Good Friday. John describes earthquakes during his vision of Jesus' return. But no matter how shaky the ground gets, we have a firm foundation in Jesus Christ, the rock of our salvation!

The Resurrection of Jesus

Matthew 28:1–10

Angels often proclaim important events in salvation history. In the events surrounding the first Christmas, angels appeared to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. Now at the resurrection, the angel proclaims that Christ has risen.

The guards watching the tomb, and later the women, were afraid of the angel. However, the women had no need to fear, for the angel's message was one of good news. The resurrection Gospel is ultimately what alleviates all fear as our Lord promises to forgive and help us, now and forever.

When Jesus met the women, they worshiped Him. Worship is reserved for God alone. By bowing down before Him, these women revealed their faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Worship is also our response as, in the Divine Service, we hear the Easter message and respond with our praise and adoration.

"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). The resurrection shows that Jesus is the Son of God and that His Word is true.

It is just "as He said" (Matthew 28:6). The resurrection also reveals that the Father accepted the Son's sacrifice for our sins. The resurrection fills us with hope, for we know that as Christ has been raised from the dead, we, too, will rise to eternal life. In Baptism, we were joined to the death and resurrection of Christ, and since we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Romans 6:3–11).

Sing

Have an in-home hymn sing! Ask everyone to name their favorite Easter song, and sing it together. If you need help with the words, grab your hymnal (ebook version or otherwise) and read along. For another fun activity, have an alleluia scavenger hunt: search for all the *alleluias* in the Easter portion of your hymnal. This also works well with exclamation points!

Prayer

Say the Lord's Prayer together today.

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Death is a consequence of sin and causes me sorrow. **God comforts me with the promise of the resurrection to eternal life for all who believe in Christ.**

Bible Words

[The angel said,] “He is not here, for He has risen, as He said.”
Matthew 28:6

Fun Facts

Israelites used the Hebrew word *rabbi* as a sign of respect to their teachers and religious instructors. The term eventually developed into three words denoting a teacher’s position: *rab* indicated the lowest level; *rabbi* was the next level; and *rabboni* was the highest level. The words mean “master,” “my master,” and “my lord, my master,” respectively. At the tomb, Mary called Jesus “Rabboni.”

The Empty Tomb

John 20:1–18

Today’s account centers on the empty tomb on Easter morning and Jesus’ announcement of His resurrection. After Mary Magdalene encounters the open tomb, she goes to Simon Peter and John and declares, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb” (John 20:2).

Immediately, Simon Peter and John run to the tomb. John reaches the tomb first, but only looks in. Then, Simon Peter arrives and goes into the tomb. Peter sees the linen cloths and face cloth, folded up. When John then went into the tomb and saw the signs of Jesus’ resurrection, he “saw and believed” (v. 8).

When Mary told them that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb, the most natural conclusion to Mary’s claim (v. 2) was that someone had come and stolen Jesus’ body. But the folded-up head cloth indicated that grave robbers had not taken the body of Jesus and that He was alive.

Jesus, Our Brother

Of great significance are the words Jesus speaks to Mary Magdalene in the garden after the disciples had returned to their homes. He calls the disciples “My brothers” and refers to God as “My Father and your Father” and “My God and your God” (v. 17). Because Christ shares in our humanity, He is our Brother (Hebrews 2:10–18) and has reconciled us to God.

God is our Father, and we receive countless blessings as His children, including the promised inheritance of heaven. Our sure hope, then, is this: because of the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus, we will join with Mary and all the saints in saying, “I have seen the Lord” (John 20:18).

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son. Because of Him, You have called us Your children in Baptism. Thank You for making us part of Your family. In the name of Jesus, Your Son and our Brother, we pray. Amen.

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Sin blinds me to the truth and keeps me from recognizing and believing in Jesus as my Savior.

Jesus opens my eyes through God's Word and Sacraments so that I might believe and trust in Him.

Bible Words

The Lord has risen indeed! Luke 24:34

Fun Facts

Today, we're not exactly sure where Emmaus was located, but it was clearly within a day's walk of Jerusalem.

We're also not exactly sure what *Emmaus* means. The word likely meant "hot spring," but it is uncertain.

We may not be certain about the town of Emmaus, but we are certain about what happened there! So were the two disciples, who said, "The Lord has risen indeed" (Luke 24:34)!

Jesus Appears on the Emmaus Road

Luke 24:13–35

Cleopas and his companion were sad and confused as they walked along the road to Emmaus. Even though they had heard the report of the women and some of the apostles (probably Peter and John) that Jesus was alive, they did not believe it. Their words reveal their unbelief: "We had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21, emphasis added).

When Jesus came up to them on the road, they did not recognize Him. However, this was not just a case of mistaken identity: "Their eyes were kept from recognizing Him" (v. 16, emphasis added). By divine intervention, these disciples were not permitted to recognize Jesus immediately. Instead, Jesus desired first to instruct these disciples on the necessity of His suffering and death and then to be recognized in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus' discussion with these two disciples shows that He is the center of all Scripture: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (v. 27). "Moses and all the Prophets" is a reference to the entire Old Testament. In other words, as they walked along the road, Jesus, using the Old Testament Scriptures, led these disciples to see all that the prophets had foretold was fulfilled in Him.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for promising our Savior throughout Your Word. Thank You for always keeping Your promises, including forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe in Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

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I sin when I rely on human reason instead of God’s Word and what it says about my Savior.

The Holy Spirit gives me eyes of faith to believe that Jesus died and rose for my salvation and fills my heart with peace.

Bible Words

[Jesus said,] “Peace be with you.” John 20:26

From the Catechism

The Third Article: Sanctification

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

What does this mean? 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, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. . . . In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Jesus Appears to Thomas

John 20:19–31

Thomas, one of the twelve disciples, was not present on that first Easter evening. Though the other disciples told him everything that had happened, Thomas didn’t believe on the basis of their words alone. He wanted to see and touch Jesus’ wounds.

One week later, Jesus again appeared to the disciples, this time with Thomas present. Though the testimony of the other disciples hadn’t convinced Thomas that Jesus had risen, when Thomas saw and touched the Lord’s wounds, he did believe and confessed Jesus to be his Lord and God.

Jesus pointed out that Thomas believed because he had seen. Jesus declares those people “blessed” who believe that He is the resurrected Lord, even if they haven’t seen. They believe on the basis of words alone.

John concludes this section by pointing out that his Gospel account was written so that many people might come to “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” and thus have eternal life (20:31).

Sing

How blest are they who have not seen
And yet whose faith has constant been,
For they eternal life shall win.

Alleluia!

LSB 471:8

Prayer

Heavenly Father, forgive us when we doubt Your Word, and give us eyes of faith to see our Savior. In His name we pray. Amen.

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God demands that I love Him and none other, solely and completely. In my sin, I worship whatever pleases me the most at the time.

God's love is everlasting and ever faithful; even though I deny Him, He forgives me and assures me of His love for Christ's sake.

Bible Words

The LORD is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 100:5

Fun Facts

This account mentions the Sea of Tiberias. You are likely familiar with this body of water, even if you are not familiar with this name. It is also called the Sea of Galilee and the Lake of Genesaret in the Bible. Jesus spent much of His time in this area during His earthly ministry.

Jesus Appears in Galilee

John 21:1–19

On the night when Jesus was arrested and tried by the Jewish leaders, Peter three times denied that he knew Him (Matthew 26:69–75): twice to servant girls and once to some bystanders. The last time, he threw in a curse to doubly confirm his disavowal of the Master.

Peter wanted to keep his own neck out of the noose, or rather, his own hands and feet far away from Roman spikes. However, a few hours before, when Christ had predicted the betrayal, the would-be hero exclaimed, "Even if I must die with You, I will not deny You!" (Matthew 26:35). But now, loving self more than God, Peter folded under pressure.

How is Christ, now alive once more, to deal with the one who denied Him? That Peter regretted his renouncement of Jesus was evident immediately after he heard the rooster crow, for "he went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75).

But Judas, who betrayed Jesus, was also seized with remorse (27:3–4), was he not? Judas, however, despaired to the point of committing self-murder. Peter not only felt sorrow over his sin, but he also believed that the Lord would forgive him. Love, especially the love of Jesus, keeps no record of wrongs, so Peter, though full of remorse, also had faith in the absolution of the very One he had denied.

Prayer

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

Luther's Morning Prayer

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I sin when I live as if the ascended Christ is no longer active in my life and the world.

Jesus ascended into heaven to prepare an eternal home for me, and I can trust His promise to be with me now and always.

Bible Words

Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Luke 10:20

Fun Facts

Luke, a doctor, wrote two books of the Bible, Luke and Acts. Both were carefully recorded accounts written by an educated researcher. Both books are addressed to "Theophilus." (See Acts 1:1 from today's lesson, for example.) Who was Theophilus? He could have been someone who supported Luke's writing one way or another. The name *Theophilus* means "friend of God," so it could also be that Luke is addressing the books to all "friends of God" who read Luke and Acts. As you study the two passages for this lesson, see how the accounts link the end of Luke to the beginning of Acts, like a book series of sorts.

Jesus Ascends into Heaven

Acts 1:1–11; Luke 24:44–53

Luke connects his Book of Acts back to his "first book," the Gospel of Luke. The disciples heard Jesus' teachings and witnessed His miraculous works, especially His bloody death and glorious resurrection. Now, Jesus gives His final teachings before He returns to the Father (Acts 1:3–5).

Not only does Jesus teach the disciples about the purpose of His life and work—namely, that He came to forgive sinners by dying and rising for them—but He also prepares them to receive "the promise of the Father," that is, the Holy Spirit Himself (v. 4).

Before Jesus ascends, He commissions His eleven disciples to be His witnesses (v. 8). The Book of Acts demonstrates how the Holy Spirit works through the preaching of Christ and Him crucified to make the Church grow and flourish.

As Jesus ascended, "a cloud took Him out of their sight" (v. 9), and two angels appeared and asked the disciples why they were looking up into heaven. Jesus' Church does not live by sight, but rather by faithfully hearing His Word.

When He ascends, Jesus does not leave His Church (see Matthew 28:20). He may no longer be visibly present, but He is very much present in the baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:19–20), in the preaching of the Gospel (Mark 16:15), in the forgiving of sins (John 20:23), and in the breaking of the bread (see Luke 24:30, 35).

Sing

Look for the video "Why Do You Peer Into the Skies" on the Concordia Publishing House Music channel on YouTube and listen to a new song about Jesus' ascension. Try singing along!

Prayer

Father in heaven, keep us in Your care while we dwell here in waiting. Give us the strength of Your Spirit to share Your Word with the world so all nations will be ready when Jesus comes back on the Last Day to bring us to His side. In His name we pray. Amen.

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New Testament 4

Law/Gospel

If I do not believe in Christ as my Savior, I will not enter the gates of heaven. **I am baptized and believe in Jesus, the Lamb of God; He has written my name in His Book of Life. Someday, I will live with Him in the new heavenly Jerusalem, where there will be no more sorrow or pain or death.**

Bible Words

Behold, I am making all things new. Revelation 21:5

Fun Facts

When John received the vision of heaven that he records in the Book of Revelation, he was exiled on the island of Patmos, a desolate place used to contain criminals. Today, this island in Greece is a popular place for visitors. Popular tourist spots include a few monasteries and several beaches.

John's Vision of Heaven

Revelation 21–22

Heaven has “the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city” and “on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month” (Revelation 22:1–2).

The Tree of Life, In the Garden of Eden

God placed the tree of life in the Garden of Eden to nourish our first parents. He told them to eat its fruit and live forever in perfect peace with Him. Adam and Eve lived without sin, disease, or death. God called this heavenly garden “very good.” However, Adam and Eve chose to follow their own desires and ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Their sin brought chaos to all creation and to every baby born to humans.

In grace, God removed Adam and Eve from the garden and barred their way to the tree of life. Eating its fruit in their fallen state would have condemned them to live forever in sinful disaster. That’s not how God wants His beloved children to spend eternity.

The Tree of Life, The Cross of Christ

Our Savior died on the tree of the cross to reconcile us to the Father. His sacrificial death paid the penalty for our sins. We were crucified with Christ and He lives in us (Galatians 2:20). Because of the cross, we have new life in Jesus, who rose from the dead.

The Tree of Life, In Heaven

John’s visions in Revelation reveal the connection between the tree of life in Eden, the cross of Jesus, and the tree of life in the new Jerusalem.

In John’s vision, the river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. The tree of life grows on both sides of the river, bearing fruit every month to feed the faithful. Its leaves heal the nations.

The true Lamb of God was crucified for our sake so that we may dwell with Him forever in perfect peace. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Prayer

Say the Lord’s Prayer together as a family.

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