



# Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

## Praying about our faithful mission together

We go forward in confident hope because our hope is grounded in Christ. We finally meet one another—not in our agreements or disagreements—but at the foot of the cross, where God is faithful, where Christ is present with us, and where, by the power of the Spirit, we are one in Christ.

We offer these scriptures and prayers for your prayerful reflection on our faithful mission together. We start our reflection together where Christ always meets us, at the foot of the cross, as the church pauses on Holy Cross Day (September 14) to ponder the mystery of the cross and its victory. We move through a series of reflections toward the healing, wholeness, and power of Christ's love that we reflect on as the church remembers St. Luke, Evangelist, the week of October 18. These prayers, psalms and scripture readings are not intended to replace the regular Sunday lectionary, but are offered for reflection by groups and individuals during the week outside the Sunday assembly. All hymns listed for reflection are from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

As you reflect on these scripture texts, you, might ask:

- What is God up to in these texts? What do they say about God, us, and our world?
- How do these texts send us and equip our witness?
- Reflecting on the message of this text, what does it mean to be faithful?

## Week beginning on Holy Cross Day (September 14)

### 1 Corinthians 1:18–24

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

### **John 3:13-17**

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

### **Psalm 98**

<sup>1</sup>Sing a new song to the LORD, who has done <sup>1</sup> marvelous things,  
whose right hand and holy arm have <sup>1</sup> won the victory.  
<sup>2</sup>O LORD, you have made <sup>1</sup> known your victory,  
you have revealed your righteousness in the sight <sup>1</sup> of the nations.  
<sup>3</sup>You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the <sup>1</sup> house of Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen the victory <sup>1</sup> of our God.  
<sup>4</sup>Shout with joy to the LORD, <sup>1</sup> all you lands;  
lift up your voice, re- <sup>1</sup>joice, and sing.  
<sup>5</sup>Sing to the LORD <sup>1</sup> with the harp,  
with the harp and the <sup>1</sup> voice of song.  
<sup>6</sup>With trumpets and the sound <sup>1</sup> of the horn  
shout with joy before the <sup>1</sup> king, the LORD.  
<sup>7</sup>Let the sea roar, and <sup>1</sup> all that fills it,  
the world and those who <sup>1</sup> dwell therein.  
<sup>8</sup>Let the rivers <sup>1</sup> clap their hands,  
and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD, who comes to <sup>1</sup> judge the earth.  
<sup>9</sup>The LORD will judge the <sup>1</sup> world with righteousness  
and the peo- <sup>1</sup> ples with equity.

### **Prayer for this week:**

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross so that he might draw the whole world to himself. To those who look upon the cross, grant your wisdom, healing, and eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Hymns:**

637 Holy God, Holy and Glorious

651 Oh, Praise the Gracious Power

### **Week beginning September 20**

#### **Romans 8:34-35, 38-39**

Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? [. . .] For I am convinced 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.

### **John 10:11-18**

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away-- and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care 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. I have other sheep that do not belong to 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 in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

### **Psalm 100**

<sup>1</sup>Make a joyful noise to the LORD, <sup>1</sup> all you lands!

<sup>2</sup>Serve the LORD with gladness; come into God's presence <sup>1</sup> with a song.

<sup>3</sup>Know that the LORD is God, our maker to whom <sup>1</sup> we belong;  
we are God's people and the sheep <sup>1</sup> of God's pasture.

<sup>4</sup>Enter the gates of the LORD with thanksgiving and the <sup>1</sup> courts with praise;  
give thanks and bless God's <sup>1</sup> holy name.

<sup>5</sup>Good indeed is the LORD, whose steadfast love is <sup>1</sup> everlasting,  
whose faithfulness endures from <sup>1</sup> age to age.

### **Prayer for this week:**

O most loving Father, you want us to give thanks in all circumstances and to lay all our cares on you, knowing that you care for us. Grant that fears and anxieties in this mortal life may not hide from us the light of your immortal love shown to us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
(*Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care*, page 259)

### **Hymns:**

358 Great God, Your Love Has Called Us

587, 588 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

### **Week beginning September 27**

#### **Ephesians 2:13-14, 21-22**

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. [. . .] In him, the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

### **John 14:1-7**

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to

myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

### **Psalm 46**

<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
<sup>2</sup>Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,  
and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;  
<sup>3</sup>though its waters rage and foam,  
and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.  
<sup>4</sup>There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.  
<sup>5</sup>God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken;  
God shall help it at the break of day.  
<sup>6</sup>The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake;  
God speaks, and the earth melts away.  
<sup>7</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.  
<sup>8</sup>Come now, regard the works of the LORD,  
what desolations God has brought up on the earth;  
<sup>9</sup>behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world;  
who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.  
<sup>10</sup>"Be still, then, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth."  
<sup>11</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

### **Prayer for this week:**

Gracious Father, we pray for your holy catholic church. Fill it with all truth and peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in need, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 73)

### **Hymns:**

530 Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather  
729 The Church of Christ, in Every Age

### **Week beginning October 4**

#### **Colossians 3:14-17**

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all

wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### **Matthew 22:34-40**

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

### **Psalm 91**

<sup>1</sup>You who dwell in the shelter of <sup>1</sup> the Most High,  
    who abide in the shadow of <sup>1</sup> the Almighty—  
<sup>2</sup>you will say to the LORD, "My refuge <sup>1</sup> and my stronghold,  
    my God in whom I <sup>1</sup> put my trust."  
<sup>3</sup>For God will rescue you from the snare <sup>1</sup> of the hunter  
    and from the <sup>1</sup> deadly plague.  
<sup>4</sup>God's wings will cover you, and you will find ref- <sup>1</sup> uge beneath them;  
    God's faithfulness will be your shield <sup>1</sup> and defense.  
<sup>5</sup>You shall not fear any terror <sup>1</sup> in the night,  
    nor the arrow that <sup>1</sup> flies by day;  
<sup>6</sup>nor the plague that stalks <sup>1</sup> in the darkness,  
    nor the sickness that lays <sup>1</sup> waste at noon.  
<sup>7</sup>A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at <sup>1</sup> your right hand,  
    but it will <sup>1</sup> not come near you.  
<sup>8</sup>You will only have to look <sup>1</sup> with your eyes,  
    and you will see the reward <sup>1</sup> of the wicked.  
<sup>9</sup>Because you have made the <sup>1</sup> LORD your refuge,  
    and the Most High your <sup>1</sup> habitation,  
<sup>10</sup>no evil <sup>1</sup> will befall you,  
    nor shall affliction come <sup>1</sup> near your dwelling.  
<sup>11</sup>For God will give the angels charge <sup>1</sup> over you,  
    to guard you in <sup>1</sup> all your ways.  
<sup>12</sup>Upon their hands they will <sup>1</sup> bear you up,  
    lest you strike your foot a- <sup>1</sup> gainst a stone.  
<sup>13</sup>You will tread upon the lion <sup>1</sup> cub and viper;  
    you will trample down the lion <sup>1</sup> and the serpent.  
<sup>14</sup>I will deliver those who <sup>1</sup> cling to me;  
    I will uphold them, because they <sup>1</sup> know my name.  
<sup>15</sup>They will call me, and I will <sup>1</sup> answer them;  
    I will be with them in trouble; I will rescue and <sup>1</sup> honor them.  
<sup>16</sup>With long life will I <sup>1</sup> satisfy them,  
    and show them <sup>1</sup> my salvation.

**Prayer for this week:**

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen. (Attributed to St. Francis, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 87)

**Hymns:**

648 Beloved, God's Chosen

750 Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart

**Week beginning October 11****Ephesians 4:1-6**

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

**John 17:15-23**

“I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

**Psalm 121**

<sup>1</sup>I lift up my eyes <sup>1</sup> to the hills;  
from where is my <sup>1</sup> help to come?  
<sup>2</sup>My help comes <sup>1</sup> from the LORD,  
the maker of heav- <sup>1</sup> en and earth.  
<sup>3</sup>The LORD will not let your <sup>1</sup> foot be moved  
nor will the one who watches over you <sup>1</sup> fall asleep.  
<sup>4</sup>Behold, the keep- <sup>1</sup> er of Israel  
will neither slum- <sup>1</sup> ber nor sleep;  
<sup>5</sup>the LORD watches <sup>1</sup> over you;  
the LORD is your shade at <sup>1</sup> your right hand;  
<sup>6</sup>the sun will not strike <sup>1</sup> you by day,

nor the <sup>l</sup> moon by night.  
The LORD will preserve you <sup>l</sup> from all evil  
and will <sup>l</sup> keep your life.  
<sup>8</sup>The LORD will watch over your going out and your <sup>l</sup> coming in,  
from this time forth for- <sup>l</sup> evermore.

**Prayer for this week:**

In you, Father all-mighty, we have our preservation and our bliss. In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving. You are our mother, brother, and savior. In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit, is marvelous and plenteous grace. You are our clothing; for love you wrap us and embrace us. You are our maker, our lover, our keeper. Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Amen. (A prayer of Julian of Norwich, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, page 87)

**Hymns:**

576 We All Are One in Mission  
656 Blest Be the Tie that Binds

**Week beginning October 18 (Luke, Evangelist)**

**Isaiah 35:5-8**

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

**Psalm 133**

<sup>1</sup>How good and how pleas- <sup>l</sup> ant it is,  
when kindred live togeth- <sup>l</sup> er in unity!  
<sup>2</sup>It is like fine oil upon the head, flowing down up- <sup>l</sup> on the beard,  
upon the beard of Aaron, flowing down upon the collar <sup>l</sup> of his robe.  
<sup>3</sup>It is like the dew of Hermon flowing down upon the <sup>l</sup> hills of Zion.  
For there the LORD has commanded the blessing: life for- <sup>l</sup> evermore.

**Or Psalm 51:1-11**

<sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your <sup>l</sup> steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out <sup>l</sup> my offenses.  
<sup>2</sup>Wash me through and through <sup>l</sup> from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me <sup>l</sup> from my sin.  
<sup>3</sup>For I know <sup>l</sup> my offenses,  
and my sin is ev- <sup>l</sup> er before me.  
<sup>4</sup>Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil <sup>l</sup> in your sight;  
so you are justified when you speak and right <sup>l</sup> in your judgment.

<sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born <sup>1</sup> steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my <sup>1</sup> mother's womb.  
<sup>6</sup>Indeed, you delight in truth <sup>1</sup> deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom <sup>1</sup> deep within.  
<sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I <sup>1</sup> shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be pur- <sup>1</sup> er than snow.  
<sup>8</sup>Let me hear <sup>1</sup> joy and gladness;  
that the body you have broken <sup>1</sup> may rejoice.  
<sup>9</sup>Hide your face <sup>1</sup> from my sins,  
and blot out <sup>1</sup> all my wickedness.  
<sup>10</sup>Create in me a clean <sup>1</sup> heart, O God,  
and renew a right spir- <sup>1</sup> it within me.  
<sup>11</sup>Cast me not away <sup>1</sup> from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spir- <sup>1</sup> it from me.  
<sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of <sup>1</sup> your salvation  
and sustain me with your boun- <sup>1</sup> tiful Spirit.

### **Luke 1:1-4, 24:44-53**

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you-- that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

*Or*

### **Luke 4:14-21**

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:  
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

**Prayer for this week:**

Almighty God, you inspired your servant Luke to reveal in his gospel the love and healing power of your Son. Give your church the same love and power to heal, and to proclaim your salvation among the nations to the glory of your name, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our healer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Hymns:**

612 Healer of Our Every Ill

219 Healer of Boundless Compassion

**Attributions:**

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Psalms:

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