

## Second to Last Sunday of the Church Year

*First recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the weekly section of the Small Catechism. Then read the Proper and assigned Scripture reading followed by the devotion. Conclude with singing the hymn of the week.*



**Weekly Catechism section:** *Sixth Petition (Luther's Small Catechism)*  
**Hymn of the Week:** *The Day is Surely Drawing Near (TLH 611)*

### Monday - Introit (Psalm 54:1-2, 3-5, 7)

#### **Read Psalm 54.**

In our *Introit* we sing the words of Psalm 54: "Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your strength!" God promises to vindicate his children. This means that he will prove to all heaven and earth that the faith he has created in us is true. In the meantime he continues to prove our faith through the attacks of the devil and his angels. The prophet Daniel says, "As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time." The demons will no longer attack our faith with lies against Christ and his Word. They will no longer drive us to despair and doubt of God's promises. Their dominion over the hearts of the nations and their twisting of the pure doctrine of Christ the crucified will cease. But until then their lives are prolonged for a season and a time. It is God's will that we still contend against the powers of hell until the books are opened for judgment. We who bear these burdens with our fellow Christians are now enduring God's fatherly judgment and chastisement, the flames that come down from the Ancient of Days to prove our faith as gold is proven by fire. We therefore take courage from this coming vindication. The devil's seeming triumph over God's saints will end.

This is the comfort of Daniel's prophesy. God reveals what is already accomplished in Christ: "Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom." After his resurrection Jesus said (Matt 28:18), "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." Jesus has been given the name above every name (Phil 2:9). His name rises above all sin, death, and hell, which was all nailed to the cross and left in the tomb. As we bear one another's burdens, we should know two things. First, our battle against sin and the devil's lies rages only for a little while. Second, our victory is already found in Christ whose Father has prepared his kingdom

of glory for us before the foundations of the world. So as we visit one another in our sickness, hunger, nakedness, and even bondage, remember what the Psalmist says, "The Lord is with those who uphold my life." May we all therefore look with joy to our Judge. He has saved us by his name. And he will vindicate us by his strength.

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## **Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Daniel 7:9-14)**

### ***Read Daniel 7.***

The coming judgment of Christ is not a mythical story detached from world history. No, it is the very end of world history. Daniel describes four beasts, which represent four kingdoms. All of these kingdoms played pivotal roles in setting the scene for when Jesus would be born and when he would die. If the second beast, the Persians, had not taken over the first beast, the Babylonians, then there would not have been a Cyrus to send a remnant of Judah back to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, and the Savior of the world would not have been born in Bethlehem. If the third beast, the Kingdom of Alexander the Great, would not have taken over the Persians, then the western world would not have had a common Greek language, and the New Testament, which was written in Greek, would not have spread as well as it did. If the Romans, the fourth beast, would not have taken over the Greek empires then there would not have been a decree by Caesar Augustus for the world to be registered, and there would have been no journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. There would have been no Pontius Pilate, no crucifixion, and therefore no salvation for the world.

I suppose one might argue that God could have brought all this about in another way. But that is beside the point. The point is that God was behind every action in history in order to bring about our salvation, in order to give up his only begotten Son to die for our sins. But here we find in Daniel's prophecy that not only has God worked all things out for his Son to be born in the flesh and die for our sins, he is still working everything out so that we who are written in the book of life would finally be rescued from this wicked world. All evil forces of the Antichrist promoting violence, deceit, and especially false doctrine, though they are prolonged for a season and a time, will finally have their dominion taken away. The Author of history has already determined it. As surely as the Son of Man has received all dominion from the Ancient of Days, both from eternity and in his first coming by his death and resurrection, he will certainly claim it for all to see when he comes to take us, his prized possession, home.

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**Wednesday - Gradual (Psalm 50:4, 6)**

***Read Psalm 50.***

The testimony of God's judgment is everywhere. Whenever someone dies, gets sick, has a falling out, or attacks the truth, this is a sign of God's judgment. When the earth gives way to quakes, hurricanes, floods, fires, and all disasters, and while the expanse of the sky stretches farther than the eye can see, the very heavens declare God's righteousness. This is because God created all things. His handiwork is in the details. His creation is a witness to his coming judgment, and this is especially the case when we can see the corruption of his creation. He will not sit idly by. So we confess in the *Gradual* the words of Psalm 50, "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth that he may judge his people."

But as his people, we know his judgment as that which comes out of Zion. That is, we know his judgment from his holy temple, from his church, from his precious gospel of his Son who fulfilled all righteousness for us as he bore our sin. God is the perfection of beauty. Therefore, his judgment is not a terror to us. It is beautiful. What is a terror to those who oppose him is comfort for those who take refuge in him. The last judgment often troubles sincere Christians who tremble over the thought of eternal punishment. Our old, sinful Adam in all of us tries to put God on trial for this. But God is the Creator. His meticulous work in forming his creation with great care was good and just and fair in every way. He provides the exact amount for every cell and molecule. He has set the sun and moon at the perfect distance from the earth. His creation screams out his righteousness. The heavens declare it. He is just. So if he comes to judge his people, then we can know he will be good and just. We look forward to our Old Adam finally being put away from us. And in the meantime, we look to the perfection of his beauty to come out of Zion, his holy hill, where he has provided atonement through the blood of his Son. We know his righteousness through the mercy of his Son. We therefore look forward to it in his judgment, confident that it will be our redemption.

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## **Thursday - Epistle (2 Peter 3:3-14)**

### ***Read 2 Peter 3.***

A scoffer is someone who purposefully forgets and dismisses God's clear Word. There is nothing more profound, more revealing, and more enlightening than the first chapters of Genesis. They describe how God created the whole world by his Word, shaping everything out of the water from the deep over which the Spirit hovered. They describe how God created man both male and female, giving them everything they need in this life. None of the creation myths of the pagans compare to this almighty, loving, and caring God. There is no God like him. The heavens declare his glory. And the only reason we can't hear what the stars, moon, sun, and all of creation are screaming at us is because of the sinful nature, which shuts its ears to the Word of God. A scoffer is someone who not only has the sinful nature. He doesn't merely struggle with the hard sayings of Scripture. No, he mocks them. He doesn't even consider them. He willfully forgets that the very Word he mocks is how all things came into existence, and the very water he drinks is what God used to form all things. So he mocks. He says that God isn't coming back to judge, because he denies that God is already close at hand, holding all things together.

But we know who God is. We know that he is patient, not wanting anyone to perish. We know this patience in the suffering and death of Christ for our sins. Here is true wisdom, not recognized by the world, but received through faith. So when our Lord finally appears for judgment, we can know for sure that his patience was far greater than ours. The fact that he lets the scoffers scoff and not immediately strike them dead -- the fact that he even converts many of them to humility and faith in his Son! -- is beyond our understanding. His patience toward us when we fall asleep and fall in weakness is revealed in Christ's fervent prayers and intercessions for us as he continues to give us his body and blood. To meet this patient Lord face to face is something to look forward to. God keep us pure from false belief, pride, and a scoffing attitude as we rest firmly on his Word by which he upholds all things, especially our salvation.

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## **Friday - Alleluia Verse (Isaiah 35:10)**

### ***Read Isaiah 35.***

The *Alleluia* verse is from Isaiah 35. In the previous chapter, Isaiah describes God's judgment against all the nations. It's important to understand the historical context to this prophecy. Northern Israel was being taken away captive by Assyria, a great empire from the north east. Assyria had a unique foreign policy. They wouldn't just kill everyone and enslave the survivors. They would certainly kill a good amount of people, especially among the ruling class. But their strategy was to take the upper class citizens away to live in the far countries of the empire. They would leave the poorest of the land and then reoccupy the land with their own people. This tactic allowed them to increase their empire with people, but it would also cause the people who were conquered to lose their culture. The people who were carried away were assimilated into the societies far away. And the people who remained were mixed with the cultures and religions that reoccupied them, allowing Assyria to take control not only of the land of the people they conquered, but even their very souls and identity. The Babylonians who later conquered the Assyrians would use the same strategy against Judah, carrying God's people away captive.

But God had another plan. Preserving his Word among his remnant, he promised to judge all the nations and rescue his remnant scattered abroad. This includes not only those who were originally from Israel and Judah. It includes all those who trembled at and trusted his Word (Is 57:15; 66:2). He promised redemption, and he accomplished it by sending his Son to redeem all sinners by his blood. Thus, the ransomed of the Lord will come to Zion. They will possess the nations, meaning that they will hail from all over the world. Zion is God's holy hill of gladness. It was represented by the mount of the Temple in Jerusalem. Now it is revealed as all those who hear and believe the voice of Christ. We are strangers, scattered throughout the world. But he visits us. He will redeem us, as surely as he has ransomed us by his own blood. He who comes in judgment comes to bring us everlasting joy, prepared for us in Christ.

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## **Saturday - Gospel (Matthew 25:31-46)**

### ***Read Matthew 25.***

Christians are judged by the Lord throughout their lives, forced daily to examine their sins according to the mirror of God's law. St. Paul says that we are to judge ourselves so that we do not come under judgment. In fact, God himself judges us for discipline so that we are not condemned with the rest of the world (1 Cor 11:31-32). Our faith is tested throughout our lives. God continues to trim us and dress us. That is, he cuts away at the pride of our hearts and dresses us with the righteousness of Jesus (John 15:1-5). And he does this so that we would bear fruits of love for our neighbor, especially for those of the household of faith (Gal 6:10). The Christian desires this, because this is what pleases God (2 Cor 5:9). From his faith in Christ flows the desire to love the people whom God has given him to love. But because he has his sinful desires, God leads him daily to see that lack of love in his own members (Rom 7:18). And by the gospel God strengthens him in faith toward Christ and fervent love for his fellow redeemed.

Christ identifies with his Christians. He identifies with the most despised among them, who suffer hunger, thirst, poverty, and even imprisonment for the truth. He identifies with those who are so easy to ignore, both young and old. He says, as much as you did to the least of these you did to me. And so he trains us in the faith by giving us fellow Christians to pray for, to visit, clothe, and feed. He teaches us that it is better to stand with them than to dwell in the tents of the wicked. It is better to enjoy the fellowship of other believers who confess the true doctrine of Christ and remind each other of their baptism where God called them each by name. The faith of each is strengthened when they partake together, with repentant hearts, of the body and blood of Christ. And their faith is tried like silver and gold throughout their lives as they bear one another's burdens, mourn with those who mourn, and comfort each other with the forgiveness that comes from Jesus' pierced side. They are each judged daily so that when their Judge finally appears, they receive him with joy.

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611

The Day is Surely Drawing Near

Luke 21 : 25-36

8. 7. 3. 7. 3. 8. 7.

Es ist gewisslich an der Zeit  
Bartholomäus Ringwaldt, 1586, *ad.*  
Tr., Philip A. Peter, 1880, *alt.*

Es ist gewisslich  
"Geistliche Lieder"  
Wittenberg, 1535



1 The day is sure-ly draw-ing near When God's Son, the A-noint-ed,  
2 A trum-pet loud shall then re-sound And all the earth be shak-en.  
3 A book is o-pened then to all, A rec-ord tru-ly tell-ing  
4 Then woe to those who scorned the Lord And sought but car-nal plea-sures,



Shall with great maj-es-ty ap-pear As Judge of all ap-point-ed.  
Then all who in their graves are found Shall from their sleep a-wak-en;  
What each hath done, both great and small, When he on earth was dwell-ing;  
Who here de-spised His pre-cious Word And loved their earth-ly trea-sures!



All mirth and laugh-ter then shall cease When flames on flames will  
But all that live shall in that hour By the Al-might-y's  
And ev-'ry heart be clear-ly seen, And all be known as  
With shame and trem-bling they will stand And at the Judg-e's



still in-crease, As Scrip-ture tru-ly teach-eth.  
bound-less pow'r Be changed at His com-mand-ing.  
they have been In tho'ts and words and ac-tions.  
stern com-mand To Sa-tan be de-liv-ered. A-men.



5 O Jesus, who my debt didst pay  
And for my sin wast smitten,  
Within the Book of Life, oh, may  
My name be also written!  
I will not doubt; I trust in Thee,  
From Satan Thou hast made me free  
And from all condemnation.

6 Therefore my Intercessor be  
And for Thy blood and merit  
Declare my name from judgment free  
With all who life inherit,  
That I may see Thee face to face  
With all Thy saints in that blest place  
Which Thou for us hast purchased.

7 O Jesus Christ, do not delay,  
But hasten our salvation;  
We often tremble on our way  
In fear and tribulation.  
Then hear us when we cry to Thee;  
Come, mighty Judge, and make us free  
From every evil! Amen.