

## Week of Oculi

*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:** *Introduction to the Lord's Prayer (Luther's Small Catechism)*

**Hymn of the Week:** *Rise! to Arms! With Prayer Employ You (TLH 444)*

### Monday - Introit (Psalm 25:15-16, 1-2, 17-18, 20)

#### **Read Psalm 25.**

*Oculi* means "eyes." It comes from the *Introit*, "My eyes are ever toward the Lord." Here again the *Introit* is taken from Psalm 25. This is what it means to "hear the word of God and keep it." It means to continue to hold God to his promise. It means to continue to hear his Word, and by faith setting your eyes continually toward the Lord. A woman in the crowd shouted out to Jesus, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" She was right. Mary was blessed among women. And yet even more than that, Jesus says, "are those who hear the Word of God and keep it." To keep God's Word means to believe it and depend on it throughout your life. It doesn't simply mean to know about it. It doesn't only include agreeing with it. Many people say, "I know all that stuff about the Bible. I went to Catechism class. I know it all. So don't worry about me skipping church. I'll be fine." But you see, faith is more than knowing and agreeing with the facts. It is utterly depending upon God's Word. It is keeping it close at all times, setting your eyes on what is unseen yet promised through the blood of Christ, which alone gives us a clean conscience before God.

He who does not continually depend on the Word of God is like someone who sweeps his house clean and puts everything in order, but then seven more demons come and he is worse off than before. He gets baptized and even confirmed. Everything seems to be looking good for him. But he neglects hearing the Word of God. He becomes secure in his own ability to remember what God's Word says. He becomes puffed up by his own understanding. And he doesn't depend upon God's preached Word, which alone can comfort him and defend him from the devil's accusations. So then the devil catches him without the armor of God (Eph 6), and he snatches away his faith. So, dear friends, blessed are you

who continually take refuge in the Word of God, for he looks upon all your afflictions, he forgives your sins, and he shall pluck your feet out of the net.

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## **Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Exodus 8:16-24)**

### ***Read Exodus 8.***

The finger of God both casts out demons as well as hardens hearts. The finger of God is another term for the Holy Spirit. The Ten Commandments were inscribed on tablets of stone with the finger of God (Exod 31:18), so as St. Paul says, the law is spiritual (Rom 7:14). The law reveals the guilt of sin. It increases the trespass. This is a necessary part of repentance, but it also works as a hardening against those who continue to serve their own sin. God's Spirit works through his Word to kill and to make alive. Those who continue to resist his grace are hardened by the very Word they reject. When God sent plagues on Egypt, he did so to bring the Egyptians to repentance. But God knew that Pharaoh would continue to resist his call to repentance, so he told Moses that he would harden Pharaoh's heart. People, like Pharaoh, boast in their so called freedom to reject God's Word. But they don't realize that their hardened hearts are actually punishments from God. The Word of the cross is foolishness to them. It is an aroma of death to them. And this is a sign of their own judgment. So it was when Jesus cast out demons by the finger of God. Some of the religious leaders accused him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, which means Lord of the flies. This is ironic, since Jesus is the same Lord who sent flees and flies to invade Egypt. The hearts of the Jewish leaders were hardened against Christ when he used the finger of God -- the Spirit of God -- to cast out demons.

And we should keep this in mind at all times. God's Word both saves as well as hardens. This should cause us to fear God. We should tremble at the very sound of his Word, because it is the power of eternal judgment and salvation, to give faith and to harden. We should also therefore have great confidence in the Word. Jesus says that those who keep it are blessed even more than his mother who bore the eternal Son of God in her womb. This Word has the power to condemn, but even more so does it have the power to save. It reveals to us our Savior who died to destroy the power of sin and the devil. God's condemnation to the devil's power is strong. But Christ's salvation from Satan is stronger.

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## **Wednesday - Gradual (Psalm 9:19, 3)**

### ***Read Psalm 9.***

Our *Gradual* is taken from Psalm 9, a Psalm of praise to God for all his works both of judgement as well as salvation. The first part of the *Gradual* is taken from these words, which conclude the Psalm: "Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail; let the nations be judged in your sight. Put them in fear, O LORD, that the nations may know themselves to be but men." The *Gradual* concludes with these words from verse 3: "When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at your presence." In Psalm 9, we learn that God reveals himself by what he does. This is how he is known: "The LORD is known by the judgment he executes." He is known by his acts of saving the poor and the needy and defending the defenseless. So David has this sure hope that the needy will not always be forgotten, and the expectations of the poor shall not perish forever. David calls on God to arise in order to scatter his enemies. This is what Moses would say in Numbers 10 whenever the cloud of God's glory and the Ark of the Covenant would begin to move and lead Israel through the wilderness. As we walk through the wilderness of this life, we rely on God to arise and not let the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh prevail.

God is known by what he does. Jesus' enemies claimed that he cast out demons by the power of Satan. But Jesus points to the obvious fact that casting out demons is the work of God. Jesus, as true God, used the same finger of God by which he sent pests on the land of Egypt. The same finger by which he brought judgment and plague on the enemies of his people also cast out demons from the defenseless. We know God by what he does. He sent his Son to die for the sins of the world. Christ defeated the strength of the devil who must fall and perish at his presence. He rose from the dead, arising and scattering death forever. This is none other than the finger of God. We therefore know him by his mercy toward us. We know him in his Word, which puts all naysayers to shame. And when he finally appears in judgment every knee will bend and every tongue confess who the Lord is.

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## **Thursday - Epistle (Ephesians 5:1-9)**

### ***Read Ephesians 5.***

Christ suffered on our behalf, an offering and sacrifice to God as a sweet smelling aroma. This entails two things, which cannot be separated. First, Christ has suffered the judgment we deserved because of our sins.

Second, Christ has made us pleasing to our Father. To be participants of Christ therefore means that we are not in judgment (Rom 8:1) and that we are pleasing to him. As St. Paul says, we are his dear children. The inheritance is already ours through faith (Gal 3:26). We are therefore imitators of God by walking in this very love of Christ. He obeyed his Father, not as one who did not already have the right to the inheritance; but as one who possessed all things Christ gave up his life for us. Therefore, as we possess all things, we learn to give up our lives for one another.

Giving up our lives for one another begins by actually caring about one another. It means admonishing one another, being willing to humble ourselves and swallow our pride when we have sinned against one another, warning one another, and consoling one another. It is not gossiping and getting in each other's business, but earnestly caring about the spiritual and physical well being of our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is walking as children of the light. Rather than looking the other way when anyone is caught up in sin, God would have us be honest and upfront about our weaknesses. This is so that the stronger in faith might restore the weaker with a spirit of gentleness. Paul warns, as he does so often, against participating in the filth of the world. The world is not honest. It is deceived. As it goes on committing sexual immorality and other unclean acts, it laughs at and mocks the thought of any coming judgment or wrath. The unbelievers are drunk, staggered, and confused over the danger of their souls, as they live in the darkness of sin. St. Paul warns us not to participate with them in such things. We are not sons of disobedience, but of God. Our share is with him. And as we live together in him, giving thanks together and singing hymns that teach about our Savior, we enjoy the fruits that come only from his own Spirit.

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### **Friday - Verse (Psalm 123:1-3)**

#### ***Read Psalm 123.***

Our *Verse* comes from Psalm 123, which is a Psalm of Ascents. These are the Psalms that the faithful children of Israel would sing as they headed toward Jerusalem for one of the feasts. Whether you were coming from the north, south, east, or west, or whether you were coming from a low valley or a higher mountain, going to Jerusalem was always going up to Jerusalem. It is always an ascent. This is because God dwelt there. This Psalm begins by capturing the theme for this Sunday: "Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens." When we address God our eyes are always ascending. He is always in the heavens.

And yet, this is true even in the lowliest of places where God places his name. No matter how low human reason might consider it, where God chooses to dwell is always the highest spot there is. He dwells in his Word, which is so despised by this world. He dwells with the little congregation confessing the truth of the gospel, repenting of their sins, and proclaiming the works of Christ while the high and mighty warriors of the world are shouting their own good deeds from the rooftops. God dwells with his Word, and his Word is always as high as heaven. And this is true even in the depth of our anguish and misery. Even when a Christian must be humbled because of his sins and the world's pride, his eyes are lifted up to God as long as God's promise is with him.

As a servant's eyes look to his master's hand to give him what he needs, so do our eyes wait for mercy from the Lord. This waiting is a confident expectation. It's like a child waiting while mom or dad dishes everyone up at the dinner table. The lifting up of the eyes is one of confidence that God will give what he promises. It is faith, holding on to the mercy of God. It is keeping close watch on the Word of God, guarding it and keeping it as the highest treasure in heaven and on earth, and looking up to this Word, waiting for God to fulfill what he says. And as Christ being lifted up in shame was the glory of God for our salvation, so will the lowly be lifted up in joy by the mercy of God.

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### **Saturday - Gospel (Luke 11:14-28)**

#### ***Read Luke 11.***

Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. These words sum up our Lord's entire lesson. He teaches us by warning us as well as promising us a blessing. He begins by casting out a mute demon from a man. Then, against the slander that he is of the devil's kingdom, he shows himself to be God who casts out the evil spirit with his own finger. This is the source of our blessing, namely, that Christ destroys the power of the devil by saving us from sin and every evil. But while Jesus teaches us this wonderful gospel, there is also some urgency in what he says. He isn't merely insisting that we know God's Word and agree with it. He is certainly saying this much. But he is also admonishing us to guard his Word and keep watch that we do not fall into the grips of the evil one. As the Proverb says (4:13), "Take firm hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her for she is your life." And then it continues (4:14,16): "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil... for they do not sleep unless they have done evil, and their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall."

Jesus is teaching the same Proverb. Keep watch on God's Word so that you do not give opportunity for the devil and his minions! They don't rest until they have found a soul to murder, whether by possessing the body or deceiving the mind. Those who listen to God's Word, take warning from it, and rely on it for their blessing are those who, as the psalmist says (34:13), keep their mouths from evil and their lips from speaking deceit. Those who ignore our Lord's warnings will not find the blessing in his instruction. They will shrug Luke's account off as part of a collection of superstitious myths, proving themselves to be no different than those whose lying lips identified God's free salvation in Christ as the devil's work. But those who recognize the danger of their sin and the devil's lies find blessing in Christ's words. They find their Savior from sin and Satan's attacks. Jesus died so that he might give you his gracious Word (2 Cor 5:19). So guard it! Because in the midst of death it is your life.

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## 444 Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You

Eph. 6: 10-18

Rüstet euch, ihr Christenleute  
Wilhelm E. Arends, 1714  
Tr., John M. Sloan, 1865, alt.

8. 9. 8. 8. 9. 8. 6. 6. 4. 4. 4. 8.

Wachet auf  
Philipp Nicolai, 1599

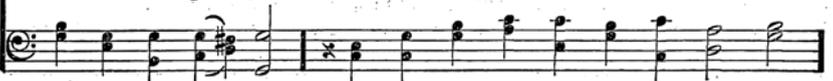

1 Rise! To arms! With prayer em-ploy you, O Chris-tians, lest the  
2 Cast a - far this world's vain plea - sures, Aye, bold-ly fight for  
3 Wise - ly fight, for time is fleet - ing, The hours of grace are  
4 Je - sus, all Thy chil-dren cher - ish And keep them that they



Foe de - stroy you, For Sa-tan has de-signed your fall. Wield God's Word,  
heav'n-ly trea-sures, And stead-fast be in Je - sus' might. He will help,  
fast re - treat-ing; Short, short, is this our earth-ly way. When the trump  
nev - er per - ish Whom Thou hast purchased with Thy blood. Let new life



a weap-on glo - rious! A - gainst each foe you'll be vic - to - rious;  
what-e'er be - tide you, And naught will harm with Christ be-side you;  
the dead is wak - ing And sin - ners all with fear are quak - ing,  
to us be giv - en That we may look to Thee in heav - en



Our God will set you o'er them all. Is Sa - tan strong and fell?  
By faith you'll con-quer in the fight. Then shame, thou wea-ry soul!  
With joy the saints will greet that Day. Bless God, our tri-umph's sure,  
When-ev - er fear-ful is our mood. Thy Spir - it on us pour

Here is Im-man - u - el. Sing ho - san - na! The strong ones yield,  
 Look for-ward to the goal: There joy waits thee. The race, then, run;  
 Tho' long we did en-dure Scorn and tri - al. Thou, Son of God,  
 That we may love Thee more—Hearts o'er-flow-ing; And then will we

With Christ our Shield, And we as con-qu'rors hold the field.  
 The com-bat done, Thy crown of glo - ry will be won.  
 To Thine a - bode Wilt lead the way Thy-self hast trod.  
 Be true to Thee In death and life e - ter - nal - ly. A-men.