

CHAPEL TALKS FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOLS 2019-2020



JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN

1 THESS 5:16-24

BY REV. BOB RIGGERT

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Rev. Bob Riggert was blessed with the joy of Jesus in his baptism on Feb. 8, 1948. That joy was nurtured in a Christian family and in a small Lutheran school in rural Bremen, Kan. Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, shaped him for the joy of service in Lutheran schools in Ohio and Indiana. He learned the joy of pastoral ministry at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., and served several Iowa parishes. He had the privilege and joy of serving Lutheran schools and other youth and educational ministries on the staff of the LCMS Iowa District West for 15 years. Semi-retired, he is blessed to enjoy his wife Diane, four children and 13 grandchildren from their home in Manning, Iowa. Pastor Riggert has authored several previous series of “Chapel Talks”. To bring the Gospel to children and resource their weekly worship in Lutheran schools is a special joy!





ABOUT THE THEME

Lutheran schools are full of joys: the first day of school; the individual gifts and personalities at every grade level; the servant hearts of staff; the commitment of congregations and communities; the involvement of parents; the excitement of a team victory or a school performance; ministry milestones and anniversaries; graduations; and many more.

The fullness of joy lies in the Gospel-centered confession and proclamation of the Lutheran school. Paul's letter to the church at Thessalonica begins by expressing the joy of Jesus: "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 THESS. 1:4-5). Paul's proclamation of Christ continues through the letter and culminates in his exhortation, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 THESS. 5:16-18). The concluding verses of this epistle will permeate and direct the ministry and message of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 2019 and beyond.

The concluding verses of 1 Thessalonians have been chosen as the theme for the 2019–2020 Chapel Talks resource. It is appropriate that the children and families at Lutheran schools join in the churchwide fullness of joy in Jesus.

While Lutheran school students experience joy in many different contexts, the most JOY-FULL time and place is in worship together. In the Divine Service and school chapel worship, the full joy through Jesus is proclaimed. Children are blessed to hear the message of joy to the shepherds of Bethlehem (LUKE 2:10); the joy of the cross (HEB. 12:2); and the joy of the resurrection (MATT. 28:8).

May the Word be taught in Lutheran school classrooms; read, sung, and shared in worship; lived in various school experiences and events; shared with families, and witnessed to the community and the world.

"Rejoice always!" (1 THESS. 5:16).



USING “CHAPEL TALKS”

The joy of Jesus’ Word and Sacrament present in Sunday worship in the Christian congregation translates to the weekly chapel service in the Lutheran school. Many congregations organize the Divine Service around the weekly Lessons of the Day. The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel readings for the seasons of the Church year are the basis for this series of chapel talks.

Series C completes the Church year (August through November). The readings of Series A are used for the remainder of the school year (December through June). Special chapel services are included for opening and closing the school year as well as for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Depending on when the local school year begins, the week number may not correspond to the school schedule. Refer to the Propers numbering for the appropriate text for the week.

For each week, one of the weekly readings has been chosen for the chapel service. A special verse or verses has been chosen as the text for the message. Weekly themes center on *joy* in Jesus or being *fully* connected to the Word.

The “JOYFULLY LUTHERAN” theme is reflected in the weekly service outline:

- “**TOOLS TO JOY**” offers an object lesson or visual for the week’s theme.
- “**JOY TOGETHER**” provides introductory words or thoughts for the theme of the day.
- “**JOY IN THE WORD**” explores the Law and Gospel applications of the text.
- “**JOY IN PRAYER**” shares a petition based on the theme of the week.
- “**FULLY LUTHERAN**” offers the opportunity to review Luther’s Small Catechism or a hymn written by Martin Luther. During the year, all six Chief Parts and several sections of Table of Duties will be reviewed.

Children welcome liturgical structure in their worship. The extent and format of that structure may be determined by local customs and preferences of the school and congregation. Some settings may include the chapel talk as part of a Divine Service. Other may be more informal. Hymn selections from both *Lutheran Service Book* and *All God’s People Sing* are included.

These chapel talks are written for an elementary-school “congregation.” The weekly messages may be adapted or expanded for younger or older audiences. The local pastor and other worship leaders are encouraged to do their own textual study to expand or enhance the message.

Worship extends beyond the sanctuary or other worship settings. Lutheran schools may want to emphasize the text and theme of the week in daily staff and student devotions. Families, congregation members, and friends may be invited to worship with the children.

“Beautiful Savior, King of creation, Son of God and Son of Man!

Truly I’d love Thee, Truly I’d serve Thee,

Light of my soul, my JOY, my crown.” LSB 537, vs. 1



HYMN

"FILLED WITH JOY, IN GRACE ABOUNDING"

BY DR. JEFFREY E. BURKART

*A theme hymn for the 2020 National Lutheran Schools Week
based on the 2020 NLSW theme: "JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN"*

Filled with joy, in grace abounding, hope-filled and awed,
We have come with praise redounding to You, O God!
For the love You shower on us
And the peace that rests upon us,
We, in ceaseless, praying chorus thank You, O LORD!

1 Thess. 5:16–18

2 Cor. 12:11

Ps. 91:1

When our lives are filled with gladness, let us give praise.
When our joys give way to sadness, help us to raise
Prayers that speak of hope-filled sureness
In Your love and perfect pureness,
LORD, lead us to full maturity in trying days.

Is. 30:29

Acts 2:25–26

Jude 1:24–25

Eph. 4:11–16

In Your Word alone is solace whene'er we stray,
Seeking sinful pathways, lawless, from Christ the Way.
Still, the Holy Spirit sends us
Faith in Christ, who always tends us,
As, in grace, He gently bends us towards Him each day.

John 1:1–14

2 Thess. 2:13

Where is peace, where grace, where mercy? Where shall we rest?
Where is water when we're thirsty, worn, or oppressed?
Borne in God's own Living Water,
By grace, through faith, Christ the Potter
Shapes each grace-filled son and daughter for ev'ry test.

John 4:1–26

Rev. 7:17

Eph. 2:8–9; Is. 64:8

Δ Fully joyful, ever thankful, let praises swell
As we glorify the Father and ever tell
How God's only Son, LORD Jesus,
Came to die and, rising, frees us;
Now, the Holy Spirit leads us with God to dwell.

Psalm 150

Matt. 28:18

"Filled with Joy, in Grace Abounding."
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Welsh tune: AR HYD Y NOS ("God, Who Made the Earth and Heaven," *LSB* 877). Meter: 84 84 88 84.
Music: Public domain.



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OPENING SERVICE

JOY: FULLY

SCRIPTURE: 1 THESS. 5:16–24

TEXT: 1 THESS. 5:16 / “Rejoice always.”

SONG: LSB 803 / “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”; AGPS 147

TOOLS TO JOY

Object Lesson/Visual: Box of various school-related items (textbooks, computer, playground items, musical instruments, etc.); sign with the word “joy” printed on it is hidden among the items. The chapel leader searches through the various items.

JOY TOGETHER

Introduction: “I know it’s here someplace.” (Search continues.) Have you ever lost or misplaced something? Somewhere among all these school items, I have misplaced “joy.” (The search continues until “joy” is found.) “I’m so relieved that I found it!”

JOY IN THE WORD

Message: We will be finding and celebrating “joy” many times during this school year. The weekly themes of our chapel services will often emphasize joy. The Bible passage that guides our celebration is from the book of 1 Thessalonians. God inspired the Apostle Paul to write this letter to the church in a place called Thessalonica. This was one of the many churches that Paul and his missionary partners started after Jesus’ resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Paul had not always known the joy of Jesus. He had searched for joy in his Jewish upbringing, in his education, and in trying to keep the laws of his heritage. He had even persecuted Christians. On the road to Damascus (ACTS 9), God brought the joy of the risen Jesus to Paul and called him to share that joy with the Gentiles. Paul was often persecuted for His belief in Jesus. Even in the trials and persecutions, however, Paul could “rejoice always.” He could rejoice

because Jesus, who had died for him and risen again, had forgiven all his sins and called him to be his child and missionary. Paul’s joy was Jesus.

Paul shares with his friends in Thessalonica that they also can expect to face trials and persecutions for their belief in Jesus. However, nothing can ever take their joy from them. They can “rejoice always” because “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (vs. 24).

This year’s “box” will contain many different things, from classes to homework to special events and activities. As we participate in all of these activities, it may seem at times that our joy gets lost. However, we are blessed to gather around God’s Word every day in the classroom and in our chapel services and Sunday worship. God’s Word takes us to the Good News of Jesus. In Him, we have joy every day of this school year and forever.

JOY IN PRAYER (PHIL. 1:4)

Jesus, through Your Spirit, You became the joy of the Apostle Paul. Through Baptism, You have brought the joy of Your presence to each of us. Bless our school year with many joys. Through Your Word, bring joy to us each and every day. Help us to rejoice in You always. Amen.

FULL OF FAITH

SCRIPTURE: HEB. 11:1–16

TEXT: HEB. 11:1–2 / “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation.”

SONG: LSB 729 / “I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus”; AGPS 126

TOOLS TO JOY

Object Lesson/Visual: Items that are partially filled: glass or bottle of liquid half full or less; playground ball not fully inflated; etc.

JOY TOGETHER

Introduction: What do these items have in common? (They aren't full.) Often, when things aren't full, they're less effective or enjoyable. A flat ball isn't fun to play with. We'd rather have a full glass of our favorite beverage than a partially filled glass. The Good News is that the Holy Spirit fills us with faith, so that we are always completely full.

JOY IN THE WORD

Message: One of the great chapters of the Bible is Hebrews 11. Today's text is taken from that chapter. God's Word defines faith for us and then gives us a long list of faith heroes — Abel, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Jacob, Moses, and others. These Old Testament people were filled with faith, believing in God's promises to them. Even though they could not see the result of God's promise of a Savior who would come many years later, they still believed fully in God's Word.

Jesus was the object of faith for these faith heroes. Through Him, God kept the promise he had made to send a Savior. Jesus fulfilled every promise God had made. Even though we didn't stand at Jesus' cross or go to the empty tomb, we know that He died and rose again. Jesus is the fulfillment and focus of God's Word, the object of our faith.

Faith in Jesus alone saves us. Faith is always a gift of the Holy Spirit. God gave us the gift of faith in Baptism. Having faith in Jesus we know that our sins are forgiven and that we will be with Jesus forever.

We don't have to worry about having enough faith. Our faith doesn't depend upon our looks, our grades, our athletic ability or any other measure we might come up with. Rather, faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, given to us by God in Baptism.

We are blessed to learn and worship together in our Lutheran school. Here through the waters of Baptism, God fills us with His Spirit and faith. Here God fills us with His Word in the classroom and in our worship together. The means of grace fill us with faith. Because we are filled with faith, we are filled with joy.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we rejoice that You filled heroes of the Bible with faith to trust You for their salvation. In Your grace, You filled us in Baptism and keep us full through Your Word. Fill us with praise and thanksgiving to You. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Catechism Review: Luther's Morning Prayer

FILLING EVERYTHING

SCRIPTURE: JER. 23:16–29

TEXT: JER. 23:24B / "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord."

SONG: LSB 817 / "Earth and All Stars"; AGPS 90

TOOLS TO JOY

Object Lesson/Visual: *Where's Waldo?* or other books or games that include a search for a hidden person or object.

JOY TOGETHER

Introduction: It's fun to look for hidden things. The *Where's Waldo?* books are full of pictures with Waldo hidden somewhere on the page. (Other examples might be shared.) Can you find the hidden person/object?

JOY IN THE WORD

Message: Since the beginning of time, people have been searching for God. In the time of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, there were many false prophets who taught belief in false gods. These false prophets led the people astray to believe in many false gods and idols. Today, people search for God in many different places — in nature, relationships or their own hearts.

Searching for God is not like looking for a character in a book or an object hidden in nature. God is found only in His Word. In the Old Testament, God's Word came to His people through Jeremiah and other faithful prophets. In Jeremiah 23 (our text for today), the prophet shared that Jesus would come to fill His people with His righteousness. God kept that promise to Jeremiah and the people of Israel. Jesus came as the Righteous One. By His death and resurrection, He fills us with hope.

The God who sent His Son is also the almighty, ever-present God. He is the God who fills all things.

Jesus, who has ascended into heaven, now fills all things with Him. There is no need to wonder where God is. The real question is this: Where is God gracious and merciful to me, a sinner? Where is He for me? The answer is in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper and in the Word of forgiveness. Right here and right now in this place.

The God who fills heaven and earth fills His Church with His grace. We are blessed to gather together so that we might be filled with His Spirit. Our church and school are full — full of God's presence and grace in Jesus.

At the lunch table, we may hear the question, "Are you full?" We may not always have full stomachs, but we are always full of God's love.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You fill all things as the glorious, victorious, ascended Lord. You clearly and fully come to us in Your Word. Bless us as we search that Word to learn even more about You. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Luther's Evening Prayer

FULL OF GLORY

SCRIPTURE: IS. 66:18–23

TEXT: IS. 66:18B / “And they shall come and shall see my glory.”

SONG: LSB 851 / “Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us”; AGPS 169

TOOLS TO JOY

A lamp with a three-way lightbulb or a light controlled with a dimmer switch that can be turned gradually from “off” to fully brilliant.

JOY TOGETHER

Demonstrate: Some lamps can be turned to multiple different levels of brightness. Some of the lights in our home (or school/church) can be turned gradually from dim to very bright. In today’s lesson, we hear about the full glory of Jesus.

JOY IN THE WORD

God intentionally turned down the brightness of His glory because of idolatry, sin and unbelief. The Old Testament Israelites were left to wander in the darkness of sin. However, God promised not to leave them in darkness but to send a Savior so they could one day again see His full glory.

One of God’s messengers to his people was the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah wrote of how God would fulfill His promise. He wrote that the Savior would be conceived in a virgin and called “Immanuel” (Is. 7:14). He shared the other names of Jesus: “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God . . .” (Is. 9:6). He even described the suffering of the Savior (ISAIAH 53).

Today’s lesson tells of the victory and the glory of Jesus. During Jesus’ life on earth, some glimpsed his glory in His miracles and at His transfiguration. However, His full glory would not be revealed until His resurrection.

The glory of Jesus shines in the darkness of our sin. Though we cannot now see His glory, He reveals it to us in His Word, and we ourselves are being transformed inwardly to be just like Him. We can’t now see Jesus shining among us. He is hidden to our eyes, revealed only by faith. But when He comes again on the last day, we will see Him in the fullness of His glory.

While we wait for that great glory, we share His glory with others. Isaiah 66 — the last chapter of Isaiah — invites all nations and tongues to see the glory of God. With our offerings this school year, we are messengers of that glory.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, Your Word reminds us of the darkness of our sin. Thank You for the light of Your forgiveness. Bless us with the vision of Your glory and help us to share that glory with others. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

First Commandment

TIMELESS JOY

SCRIPTURE: HEB. 13:1-17

TEXT: HEB. 13:8 / "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

SONG: LSB 818 / "In Thee Is Gladness"; AGPS 137

TOOLS TO JOY

Pictures of people in joyful scenes at various life stages (smiling child with toy; teenager with friends; family on vacation; senior citizen with grandchildren, etc.).

JOY TOGETHER

What brings you joy? Your answer will likely vary with age. What brought you joy as a baby most likely no longer brings you joy, although some of us may still like our "blanky" or favorite stuffed animal. Throughout the seasons of life, the joy of Jesus never changes.

JOY IN THE WORD

People look for joy in many different ways and places. God gives us many different joys and wants us to enjoy them all, from our family to our friends to our school activities. However, many of those joys change and go away.

The Book of Hebrews tells of the joy of Jesus. Jesus was the joy of the heroes of the Old Testament (HEBREWS 11) and is "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (HEB. 12:2A). Hebrews tells us that out of love for us, Jesus even found joy in going to the cross: "Who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (HEB. 12:2B).

None of us enjoys suffering. As true God and true man, Jesus experienced all the pain of dying on the cross for us and for our salvation. Your salvation was the joy in Jesus' suffering. Because of His death and resurrection, we too have the joy of Jesus' victory in our own suffering.

God's love for us never changes. It is the same as it was yesterday and will be the same tomorrow. Jesus' sacrifice pays for our sins of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Jesus, who was with us yesterday, will be with us today and tomorrow.

What will bring us joy today? Will it be fun with friends on the playground, a good grade on a test, or time with family this evening? Those are the joys of today and maybe tomorrow. Jesus is our joy every day and will be our joy eternally.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You never change. Your love for us never fades. Because of Your sacrifice, we have the joy of the forgiveness of sins. May we share in Your joy now and forever. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Second Commandment

JOYFUL PARTNERS

SCRIPTURE: PHILEMON 1–21

TEXT: PHILEMON VS. 7 / “For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.”

SONG: LSB 649 / “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”; AGPS 252

TOOLS TO JOY

Age-appropriate list of things to do with friends: play games, watch movies, do group projects, go shopping, etc.

JOY TOGETHER

What do you like to do with your friends? Here is a list of some things you might like doing together. What additions might we make? The people we play and work with are sometimes called our partners. Today's Scripture reading tells us about Philemon, a partner of the Apostle Paul.

JOY IN THE WORD

As the book of Philemon begins, Paul writes that he is a “prisoner for Christ.” Several times during his life, Paul was thrown into prison for confessing Christ. In this short letter (only one chapter), Paul mentions Timothy and several other mission partners. Philemon is a friend and a partner. Paul shares his special feelings for his partner: “I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother.”

God had called Paul to be His missionary to the Gentiles. In God’s love for Paul, He provided a number of people who traveled with him, prayed for him, and provided for him in a variety of ways. Paul’s partners included Silas, Barnabas, Timothy, Luke and a number of other very special men and women.

What made Paul’s relationship with his partners special was their partnership in the faith. Paul and his partners shared in the joy of faith in Jesus. They had the joy of telling other people about Him.

We have many friends and partners in different contexts, from teammates to playmates to neighborhood friends. We have friends and partners here in school and in our congregation too. These are special to us because we are partners in the faith. As we gather together each day in class and in chapel, and every week in our congregations, we share in the faith and joy of Jesus our Savior.

Paul, Philemon and others were mission partners. They had traveled across the sea to share the Good News of Jesus. Even from prison cells, they were partners. Together, we are mission partners sharing our faith in Jesus in our community and around the world. We want others to join us as faith partners.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for our faith partners — people in our church and school who know You and love You. Bless us as we worship, serve and witness together. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Third Commandment

JOYFUL PLACE

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 15:1-10

TEXT: LUKE 15:7 / "Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

SONG: LSB 744 / "Amazing Grace"; AGPS 63

TOOLS TO JOY

Pictures (videos or memorabilia) of Disneyland or Disney World.

JOY TOGETHER

How many of you have been to Disneyland or Disney World? Do you know what this amusement destination is sometimes called? ("The Happiest Place on Earth"). What makes it a happy place? Today's Scripture reading takes us to an even happier place.

JOY IN THE WORD

Unfortunately, not every place or time is the "happy place" of Disney parks. Our homes are not always happy places, nor are our schools or classrooms. Adam and Eve left the happy place of the Garden of Eden when they fell into sin. We have found ourselves in places of sadness, disappointment, anger and loneliness. Any place where we are separated from God is not a happy place, but a place where we are lost and condemned.

However, God always had a plan to send Jesus to bring us back into His presence. In Luke 15, Jesus tells three stories about welcoming sinners into His kingdom. He tells of a man finding a lost sheep, a woman finding a lost coin, and a father welcoming home his wandering son. All three stories illustrate God's desire to save His people and bring them home.

The stories share "the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents" (vs. 7). Because of God's saving work in Jesus, we are welcomed into Heaven, the happiest place. Like the wayward sheep or the prodigal son, we will always be welcomed into our heavenly Father's

house because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Our heavenly Father's home is always the happiest place on earth, because in His house, sinful sons and daughters are forgiven.

We thank God for the happy places on earth that He gives us — time with family and friends, exciting places to visit, etc. We look forward to being happy with Jesus forever.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we sometimes find ourselves in times and places that are not happy. However, You came to find us and bring us home into Your joyful presence. Help us to live in Your joy and share Your happiness with others. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Fourth Commandment

JOY IN SHARING

SCRIPTURE: AMOS 8:4–7

TEXT: AMOS 8:4 / “Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end.”

SONG: LSB 852 / “O God of Mercy, God of Might”; AGPS 182

TOOLS TO JOY

Share an item with the children (piece of candy, pencil, bookmark, etc.). The item and the logistics of sharing (before or after the chapel talk) will depend on the size of the group and local dynamics.

JOY TOGETHER

I have something to share with you today. God's Word for us today includes a warning from the prophet Amos to those who had not been willing to share with the needy in Israel.

JOY IN THE WORD

Do you enjoy sharing with others? The answer to that question probably depends on what we are asked to share and with whom. If it's something really important or valuable, we'd rather keep it to ourselves. We hesitate to share with people we don't like or whom we feel don't deserve it. We are all by nature selfish.

Amos was one of God's prophets sent to proclaim God's judgment on the sin of greed. Several times in this Old Testament book, the prophet tells of God's disappointment, “because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him” (AMOS 5:11). In their greed, the people kept for themselves all that God had given them. Amos proclaimed that God would judge them for their selfishness, and because they trusted in material possessions rather than the Lord.

God gives us everything — food, clothing, school supplies, and all kinds of other blessings. Out of that fullness, how can we share what we have with others who are in need? (Perhaps get some suggestions from the students: food drive for a local food pantry; school supplies for children in disadvantaged neighborhoods, etc.)

God has given us even more than our material blessings. He has given us His Son, Jesus. In Him, God shares the riches of His grace with us. We are free in Jesus to share in all the blessings God has given us. Most especially, we are free to share the Good News of forgiveness, life and salvation in Jesus.

Unlike many of the people of Amos' time, we are blessed to see God as our Giver. We are blessed to share from what He has given us. We are especially blessed to share the Good News of Jesus, our Savior.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for sharing Your love and mercy with us. Help us to share the Good News of Your forgiveness with others and to share from all the blessings You have given us. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Fifth Commandment

WEEK 8: ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

JOY WITH ANGELS

SCRIPTURE: DAN. 12:1-3

TEXT: DAN. 12:1 / "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. ... At that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book."

SONG: LSB 793 / "Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven"; AGPS 200

TOOLS TO JOY

Artists' illustrations of angels or angel figurines.

JOY TOGETHER

What do angels look like? I have some angel pictures/figurines. Is this how you picture angels?

JOY IN THE WORD

Angels are spiritual beings created by God. They don't have human forms or characteristics like you do. In the Bible, multiple descriptions of angels are given. The prophet Isaiah (IS. 6:2; 8:8) describes them with wings. John had a vision of angels blowing trumpets (REV. 9:14). Many times, God sent angels as His messengers to Earth in human form to deliver messages to people (Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah). Angels protected Daniel in the lion's den (DANIEL 6) and the three men thrown into the fiery furnace (DANIEL 3). Although there are many angels, few are named in the Bible. One of the named angels is Michael.

The Church celebrates the angels on a special day of the Church year called the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels. While the angels are holy ad enjoy the presence of God, they are not adored. All glory and honor goes to Jesus. God sent an angel to Mary and Joseph to share how they would be part of God's plan to save the world. Angels appeared to the shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus (LUKE 2). An angel was sent to be with Jesus in his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (LUKE 22:43). Angels came on Easter morning to announce Jesus' resurrection (LUKE 24). Angels are at the throne of Jesus, giving Him glory now, and will join us in the praise of Jesus in eternity.

As we wait to be with Jesus, God sends His angels to protect His children (PS. 91:9-12). He keeps us safe from all harm and danger, not only through parents, government, and pastors, but also through the angels. Imagine an army of angels protecting us as we play on the playground, as we travel home from school, and always.

Sadly, some people think that angels are only make-believe, like fairy tales. But the Bible teaches, and Jesus taught, that the angels are very real. The worship God together with us, singing, "Holy, holy, holy." And today we thank God for them.

JOY IN PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank You for creating angels to be messengers and protectors. With them, may we give all praise and glory to you today and always. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Sixth Commandment

WEEK 9: PROPER 22

JOY WITH FAMILY

SCRIPTURE: 2 TIM. 1:1-14

TEXT: 2 TIM. 1:5 / "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well."

SONG: LSB 862 / "Oh, Blest the House"; AGPS 78

TOOLS TO JOY

Family photos of the chapel leader's family, school families or other family units.

JOY TOGETHER

I have some family photos and stories to share with you. (Introduce individuals in photos and share why they are important.) It would be fun for you to share your family photos with us as well.

JOY IN THE WORD

The Bible tells many stories about families. We learn about the family of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and many other Old Testament families. We know about the family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Today's reading tells us about the family of Timothy. Timothy was a missionary partner of Paul and was trained by Paul to be a pastor.

We don't know much about Timothy's father, but our reading tells us about Timothy's grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice. God used them to teach Timothy about Jesus. Both Lois and Eunice believed in Jesus and wanted Timothy to have the same faith and joy.

We became members of God's family in Baptism. God gave us families who wanted to be part of God's family as well. Because our families want us to continue to learn about Jesus, they send us to this Lutheran school. Families celebrate Jesus in the home as they read God's Word and pray together. With Timothy, we give thanks to God for families that share the joy of Jesus.

No family is perfect. We sometimes disagree with family members. Some families have been affected by divorce and other problems. No matter the problem or situation, though, families can come together around God's Word, rejoicing that they are forgiven and can forgive because God has made us all members of His family.

Some of us may have parents, grandparents, or other family members who do not know about Jesus. We can pray for them and even share the Good News with them, that Jesus wants to be part of every family, even as He was an important part of Timothy's family.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for being the joy of Timothy's family. Thank You for our families and for the joy of Jesus that we can share together. Bless our family at this school. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Seventh Commandment

WEEK 10: PROPER 23

FULL OF THANKS

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 17:11-19

TEXT: LUKE 17:15-16 / "Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks."

SONG: LSB 895 / "Now Thank We All Our God"; AGPS 181

TOOLS TO JOY

Chapel leader pretends to write thank-you notes (examples: "Thank you" to a fellow teacher for a gift; "thank you" to a school volunteer for a donation or act of service; etc.).

JOY TOGETHER

I'm trying to get caught up on my thank-you notes. Do your parents encourage (or require) you to write thank-you notes? It's important to say or write "thank you."

JOY IN THE WORD

Today's reading tells of someone who said "thank you" to Jesus. Jesus, who performed miracles to show that He was the Son of God, met ten men who had a terrible disease called leprosy. Not only did the disease affect their bodies, it also required that they live apart from their families and friends, because the disease was very contagious.

Once again, the all-powerful Jesus performs a miracle and healed all ten men. While ten men are healed, only one of them comes back to say "thank you."

Perhaps we can think of times when we forgot to say "thank you" to our parents for their love, to our grandparents for a gift or to a friend for something nice they did for us. Perhaps we can also think of times when we failed to say "thank you" to Jesus for the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and the friends and many other blessings he gives us. Many times, we are like the nine men who quickly went on their way, failing to praise and thank God.

The one man came back to humbly fall before Jesus, his healer and Lord, and thank Him. That man, a Samaritan, had faith, according to Jesus. Just as Jesus healed the men of their leprosy, He has healed us from the disease of sin through the faith given to us in Baptism. While it's important to give thanks in all times and at all places, our worship time together is a special time of thanks. We gather in chapel and in Sunday worship to thank God for the gifts of faith and healing. We give thanks that we are God's children, that Jesus has forgiven our sins, and that we have God's Word to learn and share.

Praising God in worship is a special way of giving thanks. We also give thanks in our classrooms and with our family and friends. It is important to give thanks not only on Thanksgiving but also every day.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for every blessing You give us. Thank You especially for Your death on the cross, through which You heal us from our sin. Give me a thankful heart. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Eighth Commandment

FULLY REVEALED

SCRIPTURE: GEN. 32:22–30

TEXT: GEN. 32:30B / “For I have seen God face to face,
and yet my life has been delivered.”

SONG: LSB 802 / “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”; AGPS 239

TOOLS TO JOY

Set up some “face-to-face” encounters: students “making faces” at each other; teachers in a face-to-face staring contest, etc.

JOY TOGETHER

Being face to face with someone can be friendly, funny or frightening. What do you think it would be like to come face to face with God?

JOY IN THE WORD

Jacob could not face his brother Esau. Esau was angry at Jacob for stealing the family blessing from their father, Isaac. Esau had threatened to kill his brother, and Jacob had escaped to live with his uncle Laban. Years later, Jacob returned to face his brother. He anticipated the visit with fear, not knowing if his brother would still be angry and vengeful.

While Jacob waits to face his brother, he finds himself in an all-night wrestling match with a stranger. The stranger allows Jacob to pin him to the ground but touches Jacob's hip and puts it out of joint. Jacob demands a blessing from his pinned opponent. He gets more than a blessing. He gets a name change, a new identity: Israel — the one who wrestles with God. That's what Israel means, and that's who Jacob becomes. From this time forward, the descendants of Jacob would be called the children of Israel, God's Israel.

Jacob knew that he had come face to face with God. To see God face to face could be a very frightening experience. God is holy, and we do not deserve to be in His presence. However, in His grace, God chose to show His face to Jacob. He chose Jacob's family to be the family of His Son Jesus. While Jesus was on earth, many people saw His face. It was the face of a human being. It was also the face of the Son of God.

Because we are baptized children of God, we need not fear coming face to face with Him. God looks at us through the face of His Son Jesus, who suffered and died for us. Someday, we too will see God face to face. We will stand before Jesus and see His glorious face forever.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, Your Word brings us face to face with our sin. Because You faced the cross, we no longer fear facing You. May we always look upon Your glorious face. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Ninth Commandment

TRUTH-FULL

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 8:31-36

TEXT: JOHN 8:32 / "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

SONG: LSB 656 & 657 / "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"; AGPS 50 & 51

TOOLS TO JOY

National or state map of New Mexico. Mark the city Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.

JOY TOGETHER

Some towns and cities have unusual names. (You may want to identify some in your own state or area.) One of most unusual city names is Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. I would guess that this city is no more truthful than any other place. Today we are going to celebrate the truth of God's Word.

JOY IN THE WORD

This week, our church observes the Reformation. (Depending on the previous knowledge and experience of the children, the Reformation might be reviewed.) During the time of Martin Luther, false leaders of the church were telling untruths to the people. They said the forgiveness of sins could be bought by giving money to the church and getting a note of forgiveness (called an indulgence), that the words of church leaders were equal to the Word of God, and that people could earn their own salvation by doing good works.

During the time of Jesus, there were also many falsehoods being shared. False religious leaders taught that keeping the traditions and rules of the Old Testament could earn God's love and that some people were more important because they belonged a particular group, such as the Pharisees, the religious leaders and the Jews.

Jesus came as the Truth. As He began His ministry, Satan appeared to tempt Him, challenging Him to prove He was the Son of God by turning stones into bread or jumping off a ledge. Jesus responded to the errors of Satan with the truth of God's Word. After His death on the cross, Jesus' resurrection proved the truth that he was the Savior sent to fulfill the promises of God, and that we too would rise again.

God led Martin Luther and other men of the Reformation to the truth of God's Word. Luther read and believed that only the truth of Jesus saves us. Because of Jesus, we are free on Reformation Day and every day to worship Jesus and to share His truth.

We don't have to travel to New Mexico (or any other place on the map) to live in truth. Every day we gather in church or chapel, we hear the truth in God's Word. In the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are forgiven. Blessed with faith in the truth, we are God's children. The Truth of Jesus frees us.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You are the Truth found in the Bible, the Book of Truth. Protect us from the lies of the devil, the world and our sinful nature. Bless us as we learn, live and share Your Truth. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," hymn written by Martin Luther

WEEK 13: ALL SAINTS

JOY IN WHITE

SCRIPTURE: REV. 7:9–17

TEXT: REV. 7:9 / “And after this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes.”

SONG: LSB 813 / “Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng”; AGPS 204

TOOLS TO JOY

Display of colors: sheets of paper or poster board of many colors; containers of many different paint colors; a paint color chart from a local paint store; objects of various colors.

JOY TOGETHER

What's your favorite color? Where do we see different colors in God's creation? Today our chapel color is white. Did you know that when you combine the wavelengths of all the colors, you get white light? While it may seem common and bland, white is exciting.

JOY IN THE WORD

There are several times during the Church year when the altar coverings (paraments) in the church are white. Do you know when? (Christmas and Easter seasons.) We also worship with white today as we observe All Saints Day.

If we had to choose a color to represent our sin and situation, we would have to choose black. We are covered with the dirt and lost in the darkness of our sin. (Note: In some settings, it may be important to note that using colors as symbols has nothing to do with the color of skin.)

The Good News is that in Baptism, God washes the dirt of sin away and shines his light in our darkness. One baptismal custom is for the baptismal candidate to wear white or to receive a white robe as a reminder of their baptism. Washed in the red blood of Jesus, we are perfectly clean before God.

Our Bible reading describes the joy of heaven when we will all (no matter our country, heritage or skin color) stand before God. In his vision of heaven, John saw the saints standing in white robes symbolizing their cleansing from sin.

In some churches, it is customary to cover the casket of a person who has died in Christ with a white cloth called a pall. The white cloth is a reminder to us that we will not be saddened by death forever. After we die and are raised on the Last Day, we will stand before Jesus with all the saints in our white robes.

(Note: *The white robes of the pastor or the acolytes might also be used as an illustration.*)

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, not only may my hands and body be “dirty,” but my thoughts and actions leave me unclean. Thank You for washing me in the waters of Baptism and covering me with the white robe of Your righteousness. Keep my heart and life clean. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Tenth Commandment

FILLED WITH AWE

SCRIPTURE: EX. 3:1–15

TEXT: EX. 3:5 / "Then he said, 'Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'"

SONG: LSB 507 / "Holy, Holy, Holy"; AGPS 119

TOOLS TO JOY

Examples of things that inspire awe: pictures, videos or descriptions of amazing feats — athletic skills, artistic expressions, adventures or other things that inspire admiration and wonder.

JOY TOGETHER

The things I shared with you might be described as awe-full. When we see or experience something awe-inspiring, we may come away saying or thinking, "Wow!", "Awesome!", "That's amazing!" Today's Bible reading is filled with awe.

JOY IN THE WORD

Moses had fled from Egypt and spent 40 years as a shepherd in the wilderness. His routine was disrupted one day when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush. The experience was awe-full, full of awe. Moses saw a burning bush, but the bush was not burning up. He heard his name being called from the bush and responded by covering his face and taking off his sandals as a sign of respect, because he knew that he was standing in the presence of God. What he didn't know was that this was Christ (the angel of the Lord) in the burning bush. Now *that* is awe-full.

What would it be like to be in God's holy presence? We might think it would be awful, as in terrifying. We know we are not holy. In fact, we are the exact opposite. Because of our sin, we like Moses are not worthy to come into God's presence.

The Good News is that God came to Moses to share His plan for Moses and His people. God would rescue Israel so that he could send the Savior of the world through them. Jesus would bring His holiness to all people. He would stand on our sinful ground, so that all who believed in Him would be welcomed into His presence.

When a child is welcomed into God's family through Baptism, we stand in awe of God's grace. When we go to the altar to receive the body and blood of Jesus, we stand in awe of God's provision for us. When the pastor shares that in Jesus' name and stead our sins are forgiven, we stand in awe of God's love.

It's wonderful to experience awe. It's even more amazing that God kept Moses and keeps us in the awe of His presence.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, I am awed by Your nature as true God and true Man. I am awed that You would choose to die for me and claim me as Your child. May I always be filled with awe as I worship You. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Close to the Commandments

JOY IN WORK

SCRIPTURE: 2 THESS. 3:6–13

TEXT: 2 THESS. 3:10B–11 / “If anyone is not willing to work; let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.”

SONG: LSB 783 & 784 / “Take My Life and Let it Be”; AGPS 223

TOOLS TO JOY

List of “work” words: schoolwork, homework, yard-work, working out, etc.

JOY TOGETHER

What do these words have in common? What do you think of when you see these words? Sometimes we complain about work: I have too much homework; I don’t have time to do all my work; work is boring. In today’s Bible reading, the Apostle Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica and us about God’s gift of work.

JOY IN THE WORD

Paul always preached about and wrote about the joy of Jesus. Before Paul wrote about work in today’s reading, he reminded the Christians, “May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ” (2 THESS. 3:5).

As a boy, Jesus probably worked in his earthly father Joseph’s carpenter shop. He watched Joseph and His mother Mary work every day. Jesus called disciples from their work as fishermen and other jobs. Before he became an apostle, Paul worked as a tentmaker. God created us for work.

Work became hard for Adam and Eve after the fall into sin. The consequences of sin included “thorns and thistles” and “the sweat of your face” (GEN. 3:18, 19). When our parents’ work is stressful or we are overwhelmed by homework, it reminds us that our world is fallen because of sin.

Jesus’ work on Earth as the sinless Son of God was to do the work of the Law perfectly and then to go to the cross to die for us under the Law. On Good Friday, when Jesus died, He said, “It is finished.” His resurrection proved that his work for us was complete and there was nothing we could add to it. Jesus has done it all.

Because Jesus has done the work of salvation for us, we serve Him faithfully in our own work. When we do our homework and our chores at home, we thank and honor God. To not work faithfully and joyfully is to dishonor God. There is a saying, “Idleness is the devil’s workshop.” When we are not working in the joy of Jesus, we are more tempted to do things that get us into trouble.

School is work. Living together in our families is work. Being on a team or in a study group or club is work. Life is work. But in Jesus, work is joy because “It is finished” even before we get started. Now, let’s get to work, in Jesus’ name.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You did the most important work of all. You came to Earth and went to the cross, finishing the work of salvation. Bless all the work that we do in Your name and to Your glory. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Explanation to the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed

WEEK 16: LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

JOY WITH JESUS

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 23:27-43

TEXT: LUKE 23:43 / "And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'"

SONG: LSB 672 / "Jerusalem the Golden"; AGPS 270

TOOLS TO JOY

Photos or list of joyful gatherings: family reunions; "selfies" of friends, gatherings at games or other events; weddings; baptisms; etc.

JOY TOGETHER

What or who do you think of when you think of a joyful gathering? We have just looked at some possibilities. (Perhaps get other suggestions from the children: "When our class went to the zoo/school basketball game", etc.). We thank God for joyful gatherings.

JOY IN THE WORD

Our Bible reading today does not describe a joyful gathering. The gathering scene is the crucifixion of Jesus. Gathered with Jesus were His mother Mary and disciple John. Roman soldiers were present, as well as religious leaders who had begged Pilate to sentence Jesus to death and now were now mocking Jesus and making sure His death happened. The gathering also included two criminals who hung on crosses beside Jesus. The criminals had done terrible things and been sentenced to death for their crimes.

God had planned this sad gathering since the promise of a Savior had first been given. Jesus came to pay for the sins of the entire world, including ours. It was as if God gathered all sinners at the cross so that we could watch Him die for us. Because Jesus died on the cross and our sins are paid for, Jesus promises another gathering, a joyful gathering, in which we will gather with Him forever.

Jesus also promised this joyful gathering to the criminal on the cross who saw and believed that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus said to him, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

Throughout the year, the Church has been blessed to gather together. This week is the Last Sunday of the Church year (the Church year is different from the calendar year). Even more joyful than our gatherings in chapel and Sunday worship will be our gathering in heaven with the believing criminal and all who know Jesus when He comes again.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You have blessed us by gathering us into Your family through Baptism. We thank You for gathering us together as the Church. Keep us faithful so that we might gather with You and all the faithful in the glory of heaven. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed

THANKSGIVING

JOY-FULL THANKSGIVING

SCRIPTURE: PHIL. 4:6–20

TEXT: PHIL. 4:6B / “In everything by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

SONG: LSB 789 / “Praise and Thanksgiving”; AGPS 197

TOOLS TO JOY

List of things for which to be thankful. Depending on the size of the group, develop the list together.

JOY TOGETHER

Perhaps one of the activities for your family Thanksgiving celebration is to share the things for which you are thankful. While we are thankful for God’s gifts every day, our Thanksgiving worship is a special opportunity to think about all of God’s blessings to us.

JOY IN THE WORD

The Apostle Paul’s thanksgiving list may have included food, clothing, friends, protection while traveling, church families, and other items that might also be on our list.

Paul’s thanksgiving list would have started with “Jesus.” Paul had not always known Jesus. As a matter of fact, he had tried to kill those who believed in Jesus. However, God had a special plan for Paul. He led Paul to confess his sins, be baptized into God’s family, and become a missionary. At every place Paul spoke and in every letter he wrote to his fellow Christians, he always began by giving thanks for Jesus and God’s gifts through Him.

Sometimes we forget to be thankful. Rather than giving thanks, we complain about not getting what we want. We find ourselves in difficult circumstances, and our thanksgiving lists grow short. However,

Paul instructs the Christians at Philippi to “rejoice in the Lord” in all circumstances. Greater than any earthly blessing is the blessing of Jesus dying for us and rising again.

Like Paul, we have been blessed with the Good News of Jesus. Jesus has called us to be His children in Baptism. We give thanks for our school and church where we can learn about Jesus and worship Him, and for Christian families and friends who can join us in giving thanks on Thanksgiving and every day.

We gather here together “with thanksgiving.” We give thanks for Jesus and to Jesus.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for saving us by Your death and resurrection. We give thanks for all that You give us each day. Give us thankful hearts this Thanksgiving and always. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

“Asking a Blessing” and “Returning Thanks”
(p. 32; 2017 Catechism Edition, CPH)

JOY ON THE MOUNTAIN

SCRIPTURE: IS. 2:1–5

TEXT: IS. 2:2 / “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it.”

SONG: LSB 388 / “Go Tell It on the Mountain”; AGPS 104

TOOLS TO JOY

Pictures of mountains or equipment for mountain activities: hiking boots, skis, a mountain bike, etc.

JOY TOGETHER

Have any of you been to the mountains? What activities did you enjoy or might you enjoy in the mountains? During our worship the next few weeks of the Advent season, we are going to travel with the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. While I'd like to be able to take you physically to these places, we will travel with the Spirit through God's Word.

JOY IN THE WORD

Isaiah was God's spokesman to His people about 700 years before Jesus was born. God used Isaiah to tell of God's disappointment and judgement of his people. Isaiah also proclaimed God's promise to send the Messiah as the Savior from sin. (Depending on the age and knowledge of the children, other background on Isaiah might be shared.)

Mountains can be big and high and scary. At Mount Sinai, God gave Moses and the children of Israel the Ten Commandments. The people were frightened in the presence of the Holy God. Imagining ourselves in God's holy presence, we too are frightened because we know we are sinful. However, Isaiah told God's people of another mountain, the mountain of God's holy city that God would build through the saving work of the promised Messiah.

Advent reminds us that God comes to us. We don't have to climb a mountain to worship Him. God brings the mountain to us. Jesus' death on the mountain of Calvary brought us salvation. When Isaiah prophesied, “Come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord,” he was inviting those who heard his words to believe in Jesus, who had come to save all nations.

We don't need an airplane ticket to get to God's holy mountain. We don't need any reservations or special equipment. God's Word takes us to His mountain of salvation, which really is “the highest of all mountains.”

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for the beauty and grandeur of the mountains You created. Thank You for the mountains in Your Word — Mount Sinai, Mount Zion and above all the mountain of Calvary. We rejoice at the mountain of our salvation. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed

JOY IN THE WOODS

SCRIPTURE: IS. 11:1-10

TEXT: IS. 11:1 / "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit."

SONG: LSB 332 / "Savior of the Nations, Come"; AGPS 205

TOOLS TO JOY

A piece of tree stump or other wood that is available and moveable — perhaps a piece of firewood.

JOY TOGETHER

Last week we promised some Advent travels. Where did we travel last week? (The mountains.) Today we are going to travel into the woods. What are some things you might do in the woods? (Hiking, bird-watching, even looking for a Christmas tree in an evergreen forest or tree farm.)

JOY IN THE WORD

We experience God's creation in a special way in the woods. Depending on the area and climate, we might see all kinds of trees, animals and plants. In the woods, the beauty of creation is on full display.

I'm wondering if I can get this piece of wood to grow. (Display piece of wood.) Why won't this piece of wood grow? (No roots, not connected to the rest of the tree, etc.) Rooted in the soil and receiving sunshine from above, trees grow. Without those blessings from God, it's impossible for a tree to grow.

Because of their belief in idols and their unfaithfulness to God, God had cut down the people of Israel like a lumberjack would cut down a tree. Without the blessings of God's grace, they would dry up like a piece of wood. Sometimes we might feel the same way.

However, God did not forget His people. He chose the family of Jesse, whose son would be King David, to be the ancestors of the coming Savior. There was nothing special about Jesse's family. It was like a tree stump or dried-up piece of wood, but through it, God brought Jesus into the world.

Through the Holy Spirit, God put the life of His son in Mary, the descendant of Jesse. From that stump, Jesus would grow and bring life into the world again. Jesus, the root of Jesse, would find Himself on a piece of wood, the cross, and through His suffering, death and resurrection bring life to us.

Enjoy the woods. See the life around you and the beauty of God's creation on display. Look for a stump and remember that God gives life to us all of us through Jesus.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for the beauty of the woods and the lessons in Your Word. Because You brought life into the world through the stump of promise, we have life in You now and forever. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Introduction to The Lord's Prayer

JOY IN THE DESERT

SCRIPTURE: IS. 35:1-10

TEXT: IS. 35:1B-2A / "The desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing."

SONG: LSB 344 / "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"; AGPS 163

TOOLS TO JOY

Desert scenes or list of deserts (Sahara, Death Valley, etc.).

JOY TOGETHER

Welcome back to our Advent travels. Where have we traveled to so far? (Mountains and woods.) Today we are going to travel to a desert. Have you ever visited a desert? What do you know about deserts? (Little rain, lots of sand, cacti, etc.) Today's Bible reading takes us to a desert.

JOY IN THE WORD

God's people in the Old Testament understood deserts. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they passed through the Red Sea and spent 40 years wandering in the desert of Sinai. God's people experienced harsh desert conditions, living in dry, sandy places with little food and water.

Our lives as sinners can be compared to life in a desert. Without water, in the heat of the sun, people face conditions that will cause death. Without the water of God's Word, in the heat of the devil's temptations, we face life without God. We are in trouble that leads to spiritual death.

God brought His people Israel safely out of the desert to the Promised Land. He made a promise through Isaiah to cause the sinful desert of this world to burst into bloom, a promise fulfilled through Jesus. Jesus began His earthly ministry in the desert, where Satan tempted Him to turn stones to bread. Jesus drove away Satan with the Word of God. When Satan tried to keep Jesus from the cross, Jesus kept going and died to save us.

Jesus experienced the desert to save us from the desert-like conditions of our sinful nature and life. We are blessed to have the life-giving water of our baptism so that we can stay alive in Christ.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we rejoice in the beauty of Your creation in many settings. Thank You for being with us in the deserts of our lives. We rejoice that You have watered the dry conditions of our life with the waters of Baptism. Give us joy now and eternally. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

First Petition of The Lord's Prayer

JOY EVERWHERE

SCRIPTURE: IS. 7:10–17

TEXT: IS. 7:14 / “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

SONG: LSB 357 / “O Come, O Come, Immanuel”; AGPS 186

TOOLS TO JOY

“Joy” signs displayed throughout the worship setting.

JOY TOGETHER

We have been blessed to travel together to many places in our worship these last few weeks. (Mountains, woods, desert.) We are blessed to enjoy the wonder and beauty of God’s creation in many different settings and contexts. Because of Jesus, born in Bethlehem, the joy of God has spread to every place.

JOY IN THE WORD

Our Advent prophet the past few weeks has been Isaiah. God used many Old Testament prophets to share His promises with His people. Isaiah gave God’s people hope in Jesus. We must wonder, however: Would the Savior Isaiah promised be the Savior only of the Israelite people? Or would He be the Savior for all people, on mountaintops and in isolated deserts and on distant islands? Would He be the Savior for us?

Jesus fulfilled God’s promise and came to Earth as “Immanuel,” God with us. “Immanuel” is one of the many special names that the Bible gives for Jesus. In our Bible reading today, King Ahaz was afraid of his enemies (Assyria and the northern Kingdom). He was going to cut a deal with Egypt. Isaiah’s message to Ahaz was, “Don’t be afraid. God is with us (Immanuel).”

We also have enemies: sin, death and the devil. We’re tempted to cut deals and strike bargains. Isaiah’s message to us is, “Don’t be afraid. God is with us (Immanuel).”

Jesus is with us every step of the way: in the womb, in birth, in childhood, in adolescence, in adulthood, at work, at the table, in suffering and finally in death. Don’t be afraid. God is Immanuel. He is with us! That’s the Good News for Ahaz, Isaiah and us in Advent, Christmas and always.

(Note: “Immanuel” is one of many names for Jesus. If time allows, other names for Jesus might be reviewed with the children.)

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You were with your Old Testament people. Now, you come to us as the crucified, risen and ascended Lord. Keep us in Your grace so that we might be with You eternally. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Second Petition of The Lord’s Prayer

CHRISTMAS

NEWS OF GREAT JOY

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 2:1–20

TEXT: LUKE 2:10–11 / “And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”

SONG: LSB 387 / “Joy to the World”; AGPS 158

TOOLS TO JOY

Newspapers with good-news headlines and articles highlighted.

JOY TOGETHER

Every day there is news. We talk about the news in our classrooms. We hear the news on the radio or television. Our parents may talk about the news. Oftentimes, we hear mostly bad or sad news. Today I have Good News for you, the news of Jesus’ birth.

JOY IN THE WORD

At the time of Jesus’ birth, there were no television news teams in Bethlehem. There was no newspaper crew there to get the story. It was a very different time.

For several thousand years, God’s people had borne witness to the bad news caused by sin. In the meantime, God was using His prophets to share through their spoken and written words that God would send a Savior. Nobody knew when this promise would be fulfilled.

As God was writing His story, not many would have believed the details. God was going to send His Son to a small town called Bethlehem. He would choose a humble virgin to be the mother of the Savior. He would announce the holy birth not to kings in castles but to shepherds in a dark field.

Very few people in Bethlehem knew that “good news of great joy” was happening in their town. A poor baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger was hardly big news. God was not trying to create headlines. He was sending His Son to save the world.

The angels announced the Good News to the shepherds: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” This was joyous news for shepherds and for us, the only news story in the history of the world that was announced by a choir of angels.

If we hear the news on Christmas Day, we may hear good news stories about the gifts people receive, the kindness of people, surprise visits from family, and other great and joyous stories. We know the news of all. Jesus is born for you. And not just for you, for ALL. That’s good news to share with everyone.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You are the Good News. Thank You for coming to Earth as the best news ever. Thank You for bringing the Good News to the shepherds and to us. Bless us as we hear the Good News this Christmas season and as we share it with others. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Luther’s Christmas Hymn: “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come,” LSB 358

WEEK 21: EPIPHANY

EXCEEDINGLY GREAT JOY

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 2:1–10

TEXT: MATT. 2:10 / “When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.”

SONG: LSB 397 / “As With Gladness Men of Old”; AGPS 151

TOOLS TO JOY

“Thank you” cards or notes. The chapel leader may dramatize writing some “thank you” notes for Christmas gifts received.

JOY TOGETHER

Did you get any presents this Christmas? Have you written thank-you notes to the people who gave them to you? Thank-you notes are a good way to express your gratitude to someone. Today’s lesson shares a very special response to a very special gift.

JOY IN THE WORD

Many nativity scenes show the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men together at the stable. According to the Bible, however, the wise men did not come to see Jesus lying in the manger. The wise men arrived in Bethlehem later, when Jesus was slightly older.

The Church celebrates the wise men’s visit on a special day called Epiphany. (Depending on the age and knowledge of the children, more about the meaning and history of Epiphany might be shared.) Only the Gospel of Matthew tells the story of the wise men. They came from far away, led by a star, to find Jesus. They knew a King had been born and wanted to come and worship Him.

When the wise men found Jesus, they rejoiced with “exceeding great joy.” They shared their joy with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. While we may note the gifts they gave, more important is the source of their joy, the Gift they received. The baby they saw in Bethlehem was born to be their Savior. The joy of Jesus was theirs.

Jesus is the best Christmas gift. He gives us forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. He is the gift that never breaks and never wears out.

How do we say thank you to Jesus? We offer him our joyful worship, our offerings and service, and our love for others.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You came as God’s greatest gift to the world. In Baptism, you come to us also. Bless us as we begin the Epiphany season celebrating and sharing the Gift of Your grace. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Third Petition of The Lord’s Prayer

FULLY FILLED

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 3:13–17

TEXT: MATT. 3:15 / “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

SONG: LSB 605 / “Father Welcome”; AGPS 95

TOOLS TO JOY

To-do list for teacher: finish lesson plans, pick up items at grocery store, make dinner, take children to practice, etc., or for students: finish math assignment, practice piano, help mom with dishes, etc.

JOY TOGETHER

Do you have a to-do list? Many people make lists of tasks they want to complete. Your teachers may have lists of things to do before or after school. Some of you may have lists of assignments for school. Some of us may even check tasks off the list when we complete them.

JOY IN THE WORD

As the perfect Son of God, Jesus always completed what he set out to do. After the fall into sin, God the Father promised that He would send His Son to be our Savior. Throughout the Old Testament, prophets shared God’s promise and His plan. Jesus made sure every promise was kept and the plan executed perfectly.

John the Baptist had been sharing the baptism of repentance at the Jordan River. Jesus came to John and asked to be baptized. When John questioned Jesus’ wish, Jesus answered, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Although Jesus had no sins to wash away, He was baptized as a sinner to take the place of sinners. In His baptism, He took on our sin, so that in Baptism, we might take on His righteousness. That’s what Jesus means when He said to John, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

Jesus’ baptism also began His three-year journey to the cross. Jesus left the Jordan River prepared to teach, perform miracles and show He was the Son of God. During His earthly ministry, He would do everything perfectly, living the life we were meant to live. Jesus did everything on God’s “to-do” list to forgive our sins and accomplish our salvation.

We don’t always do everything on our to-do lists. Sadly, we also don’t always keep God’s commandments. However, Jesus kept them for us, fulfilling all righteousness. In Him, we are blessed “to do” whatever glorifies God and helps others.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we don’t always do as You command us. We rejoice that we are forgiven because You fulfilled your Father’s will completely and perfectly for us. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Fourth Petition of The Lord’s Prayer



WEEK 23: SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

INVITED TO JOY

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 1:29-42A

TEXT: JOHN 1:39 / "He said to them, 'Come and you will see.' So they came and saw where he was staying."

SONG: LSB 688 / "Come, Follow Me"; AGPS 85

TOOLS TO JOY

Invitation: "Come and see!" Either a sample invitation to the worship assembly or, if the group is small, an invitation for every child.

JOY TOGETHER

The invitation says, "Come and see!" What might I be inviting you to come and see? (The children may give suggestions.) Perhaps it's an invitation to a birthday party or school program. Perhaps it's an invitation to a movie, play, or ...

Today's invitation is to "Come and see JESUS."

JOY IN THE WORD

Today's Bible reading shares the story of Jesus calling the first disciples. John the Baptist sees Jesus and calls Him "the Lamb of God." Curious people hear John's words and follow Jesus. Jesus invites them to "come and see" where He is staying. More importantly, they come and see Jesus Himself. As they follow Jesus on ministry, they will see Him teaching and performing miracles. They will also see Him condemned to death and dying on a cross. Finally, they will see Jesus alive again.

We are in a special season of the Church year called the Epiphany season. It is a "come and see" season. Though we can't "come and see" Jesus on Earth with our own eyes as the first disciples did, we can certainly come and hear His Word for us. During this season, we will hear about Jesus's life on Earth as the Son of God in the flesh – walking on this earth, teaching the truth of God, and doing the works that only God can do.

Jesus invites us to "Come and see." As we learn about Jesus in our classrooms and worship Him in chapel and Sunday worship, we answer His invitation and see Him through His Word.

Epiphany is also a mission season. It emphasizes the importance of inviting others to "come and see." We share that invitation with others through our mission offerings. We also share that invitation with our own words of invitation to friends and family, calling them to "come and see" Jesus who is the friend of sinners.

We get excited about invitations to birthday parties and other special events. The most important invitation we can share is "Come and see Jesus."

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You called the first disciples to come and see You. Through Your Word, we see that You are the Son of God and Savior of the world. Bless us as we continue to see You in our worship and our classrooms. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Fifth Petition of The Lord's Prayer

WEEK 24: THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

FULLY FAMOUS

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 4:12–25

TEXT: MATT. 4:24 / "So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them."

SONG: LSB 537 / "Beautiful Savior"; AGPS 70

TOOLS TO JOY

Pictures of famous people: presidents and other historical figures, scientists, authors, actors, etc., depending on the age and knowledge of the children. Also share a picture of Jesus.

JOY TOGETHER

Here are some pictures of famous people. Who are they and what are they famous for? What makes Jesus famous?

JOY IN THE WORD

In today's Bible reading, Jesus is beginning to become famous. People enjoy seeing famous people. If a famous athlete, actor, singer, government leader or other celebrity were to come to our community, many people would gather to see and hear that person.

Jesus' fame would continue to increase. Many people enjoyed hearing Him teach. Many others were fascinated by and thankful for His miracles. However, Jesus did not come for earthly fame. He performed miracles to give his Father glory and to show that He was the Savior of the world. His followers wanted to make Him an earthly king, but He told them that His kingdom was not of this world. His only mission was to come from the glory of heaven to our shadowed world to save us from our sin.

Jesus became much more famous than anyone in his day ever imagined he would become. He didn't become famous for healing diseases or casting out demons or even raising the dead, though He did all of those things. His fame came by His death on a cross for our sins, and by his resurrection from the dead. That's why millions of people believe in him and worship him today, 2000 years later, including you and me.

We are blessed to know and believe in the most famous person of all, Jesus, and to share His fame with others.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You did not come to be famous in any earthly sense. You came to do Your Father's will and win salvation for us. We thank You the gifts of Your grace. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Sixth Petition of The Lord's Prayer



WEEK 25: FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

FULLY BLESSED

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 5:1–12

TEXT: MATT. 5:1 / “He (Jesus) went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.”

SONG: LSB 923 / “Almighty Father, Bless the Word”; AGPS 75

TOOLS TO JOY

“Places to Learn” poster, whiteboard or other display.

JOY TOGETHER

Let’s develop a list of “Places to Learn”: classroom, library, church, desk or other areas in the home. Where’s your favorite place to learn?

JOY IN THE WORD

When we think of places to learn, we probably think of the classroom where we gather every day. As our list shows, however, there are many other places where we can go to learn. During the school year, as we go on field trips or other adventures, we even learn away from the school grounds.

One place (most likely) not on our list is “on a mountain.” That’s the learning place in today’s Bible reading. As we continue with the Epiphany season, we follow Jesus on his teaching ministry to many different places. It’s not the place that matters, but rather the Teacher and the lesson only He can teach us as the Teacher sent by God.

As God’s people journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land, God brought them to Mount Sinai to teach them. There on the mountain, God revealed Himself to Moses and gave him and the people the Ten Commandments.

The apostle Matthew tells us of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Jesus went up onto a mountain to teach the people. He came not only to preach on a mountain but also to die on another mountain, Calvary. As we follow the Teacher, we see His classroom become the courtroom of the Jewish church officials and the Roman government. We see Him teach forgiveness from the cross. We see him teach the disciples to believe in Him after His resurrection.

We thank God for the places where we learn about Him — Christian homes, Lutheran school classrooms, and churches. Every place where Jesus’ Word is shared becomes His classroom. We thank God for taking us to the places where Jesus taught and for His bringing His lessons to us today.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we are blessed to learn from you in the classrooms of Your earthly ministry. Thank You for teaching us through Your Word, which comes to us in every time and place. Bless our learning and sharing. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Seventh Petition of The Lord’s Prayer

WEEK 26: FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

FULLY LIGHTED

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 5:13–20

TEXT: MATT. 5:14, 16 / “You are the light of the world. ... Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

SONG: LSB 411 / “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”; AGPS 52

TOOLS TO JOY

Covered lights: lamp covered with a blanket; flashlight with beam hidden; candle under a box; etc.

JOY TOGETHER

Can you see the light? (No.) What prevents you from seeing the light? (It's covered.) Does a covered or hidden light help us see effectively? (No.)

JOY IN THE WORD

Last week we joined Jesus and His followers in the classroom of a mountain. Jesus' teaching in Matthew chapters 5–7 is called “The Sermon on the Mount.” Jesus' first students were His disciples. As we learn from His Word, we also become His students. Today's Scripture reading includes a lesson about being Jesus' lights.

God's Word tells us that Jesus is The Light (JOHN 8:12). The world is shrouded in the darkness of sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, the “lights” went out. Adam and Eve could not see God because they were blind in their sin. Even though we have lights everywhere — the earthly lights God created; the lights powered by electricity; etc. — we still find ourselves in the darkness of sin.

Jesus came to be our light. He brought the light of the Good News into the darkness of the world. He overcame the darkness of death in the darkness of Good Friday and brought the light of life to us in the light of His resurrection on Easter. By faith, we see His light. In Baptism, God lights the lamp of faith within us. We no longer need to be afraid of the darkness of sin and death.

Because the Light of Jesus is in us, we are lights ourselves. Jesus tells us that, as His followers, “You are the light of the world.” No longer is our light hidden. God has removed the coverings and barriers so that we can shine for Him.

You shine because Jesus shines through you. You shine when you show God's goodness and mercy in the world. You shine when you obey your parents and teachers and love your family and friends. You shine when you help others at school and at home. You shine when you show kindness to people in your neighborhood. You shine with Jesus because Jesus shines through you.

We are blessed to shine with Jesus and for Jesus. When we shine, all praise and glory goes to Him.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for being the Light in the dark world of sin. Thank You for being our Light in our Baptism. Bless us as we shine with You and for You. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Conclusion to The Lord's Prayer

FULLY FORGIVEN AND FORGIVING

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 5:21–37

TEXT: MATT. 5:23–24 / “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.”

SONG: LSB 843 / “Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive”; AGPS 96

TOOLS TO JOY

Whiteboard or other display board that can be easily wiped clean. Write down a list of offences and their sources (see examples below).

JOY TOGETHER

What makes you hurt or angry? Let's make a list: My brother tattled on me; my sister broke my favorite toy; my classmates wouldn't play with me; my friends gossiped about me; my parents . . . ; etc.

After the list is complete, ERASE IT ALL.

JOY IN THE WORD

Have you ever made a list like this or at least thought about one? At least in our minds, we all have. It's tempting and easy to keep track of other people's sins against us.

Could God start a list like this? He certainly could. He could have a list with our names on it and all the things we have done, said or thought that break His laws. Does God have a list like this? No! The Bible says, “I will remember their sins no more” (JER. 31:34). God doesn't have a list of our sins because Jesus paid for them all. Jesus' blood on the cross becomes God's eraser for us.

We continue this week with Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. Today's reading teaches us about forgiveness. Because God has forgiven our sins and wiped our list clean, we are set free to forgive others.

It's tempting to get angry at others for the ways that they have hurt us. Sometimes we even bring our anger and disappointment to church and school. Our hurt feelings interfere with our worship of God. It's hard to celebrate God's forgiveness when we don't want to forgive others.

Jesus reminds us to remember God's eraser (the blood of Jesus) which has wiped our slate clean. In that forgiveness, we can forgive others.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for forgiving and forgetting all my sins. Help me to forgive people when they do things against me. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Baptism, First Part — What is Baptism?
Which is that Word of God?

FULLY REVEALED

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 17:1–9

TEXT: MATT. 17:2 / “And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.”

SONG: LSB 414 / “Tis Good, Lord, to Be Here”; AGPS 239

TOOLS TO JOY

A curtain with someone (pastor, principal, school mascot, etc.) or something hidden behind the curtain.

JOY TOGETHER

What do you think is behind the mystery curtain today? (Get guesses from children. Reveal what's hidden behind the curtain.) Mysteries behind the curtain are fun and interesting. Magicians hide items behind the curtain. Game shows have contestants guess what's behind the curtain.

JOY IN THE WORD

For the past weeks of the Epiphany season, we have seen and heard about Jesus in a variety of roles: teacher, miracle worker, friend, leader, etc. Jesus showed that He was true man as he walked and talked with His disciples. Jesus showed that He was true God as He shared truths that only God could share, and as He did miracles that only God could do. However, in a sense, Jesus was still behind the curtain. The disciples did not fully see or realize who the person of Jesus was.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is the last event of the Epiphany season. It is an event where the curtain is pulled back, and we, along with Peter, James and John, see Jesus fully revealed as the Son of God and God's chosen sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Behind the curtain of the Transfiguration were some amazing sights: “His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.” The three disciples saw Elijah and Moses, who represented the entire Old Testament that shared the message of a Savior who was to come.

Behind the curtain of the Transfiguration were some amazing announcements: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.” The words from the Father at Jesus’ Baptism are repeated. Jesus is the Father’s only choice to save the world from sin.

Sometimes we'd like to hide behind a curtain when we have said or done something sinful. Sometimes we wish that all of our sins were behind a curtain. When we confess our sins, the curtain is pulled back. Instead of seeing our sins, we see an empty place because Jesus, the transfigured Son of God, went to the cross to take away our sins. What's more, we are being transfigured, too, changed from the inside out, to become the image of Christ.

Through God's Word, we have been blessed with the disciples to see Jesus. We see Jesus, who is our Savior from sin. Now we have the privilege of pulling back the curtain so that others might see Him also.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, there is no longer any mystery as to who You are. You are the Son of God who came into the world to be our Savior. Remove any curtain that might hide You from me or others. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Baptism, Second Part — What benefits does Baptism give? Which are these words and promises of God?

WEEK 29: FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

JOY IN JESUS' JOURNEY: FACING TEMPTATION

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 4:1-11

TEXT: MATT. 4:1 / "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."

SONG: LSB 609 / "Jesus Sinners Doth Receive"; AGPS 253

LENTEN THEME VERSE: HEB. 12:2 / "Looking to Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

TOOLS TO JOY

Tempting items: chocolate, cookies, a test answer sheet, etc.

JOY TOGETHER

When have you been tempted? Have you been tempted to take a freshly baked cookie when your mother said to wait? Have you been tempted to eat a piece of candy when you were told not to? Have you been tempted to look at another student's answers when you're taking a test? There are many temptations each day.

JOY IN THE WORD

We have begun a new season in the Church year. We are now in the Lenten season. The Lenten season is typically not a joyful season. We do not sing or say "alleluias" in our worship services. The color is purple, a symbol of repentance. There is a lot of teaching about Jesus going to the cross. We will have special Bible verses during the next six weeks. Hebrews 12 describes Jesus' journey to the cross as a joyful journey: "Who for the joy set before him endured the cross." The journey to the cross was not joyful! Jesus went to the cross so that we could have the joy of forgiveness. Jesus' journey was for our joy!

The first week of the Lenten season reviews the temptation of Jesus. Jesus journeyed into the wilderness for 40 days of temptation. Our Bible reading tells us of three temptations that Jesus faced. Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread, jump off the peak of the temple and worship the devil. Jesus faced each temptation by sharing God's Word. Jesus commanded the devil to "Be gone!"

Jesus' journey to the cross was one of constant temptations. The devil knew that if Jesus died on the cross, he, the devil, would be forever defeated. Jesus endured the cross so that we might have the joy of defeating the devil.

Our journey is also one of temptations. The devil constantly puts temptations in front of us. He does not want us to have the joy of Jesus. The Good News is that Jesus has defeated the devil at his own game, and His victory is ours in Baptism. We also have the power of God's Word. We are blessed to learn that Word in our school and church. That Word helps us send the devil away defeated.

We journey through Lent and life with the Word as our weapon.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we rejoice in Your victory over the devil's temptations. We rejoice that through Your death and resurrection we share in that victory. Equip us with the power of Your Word. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Baptism, Third Part — How can water do such great things?

JOY IN JESUS' JOURNEY: FACING CONDEMNATION

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 3:1-17

TEXT: JOHN 3:17 / "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

SONG: LSB 430 / "My Song Is Love Unknown"; AGPS 176

LENTEN THEME VERSE: HEB. 12:2 / "Looking to Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

TOOLS TO JOY

Arrange a courtroom atmosphere — judge in robe, bench, gavel, etc. Specific setting will depend on local resources available.

JOY TOGETHER

Most of us have seen a courtroom setting on television or in a movie. Some of us have perhaps been in a courtroom. What do you see in a courtroom? What happens in a courtroom? (Share dialogue with children.)

JOY IN THE WORD

Imagine us in a courtroom setting with God as our judge. The judge has a list of all the sins we have ever committed. Every lie we have ever said, every word or thought of hate, every time we have not honored our parents or teachers, every false god we have worshiped ... is written down. How do you think the judge would respond? GUILTY! God is the perfect, all-knowing Judge, and we are the guilty party before Him. Ever since Adam and Eve's first sin, we all have deserved condemnation. "Condemnation" is a rather long word describing what we deserve because of our guilt.

In our courtroom setting, Jesus steps forward. The passage says that "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world." Jesus came into the world, and He certainly saw the sin of the world. When Jesus stands before the Judge, His Heavenly Father, He doesn't add to the list. Jesus came to take the list and destroy it. Jesus came to suffer and die for every sin on every list. Instead of condemning the world, God chose to love the world. One of the

most familiar passages in the Bible is John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave His only Son." God in His love chose to send Jesus, journey to the cross, and face and remove our condemnation.

Our guilt was taken away the moment the waters of Baptism fell on us. God declared us "not guilty" in His Son. The Holy Spirit gave us the gift of faith to believe that verdict in Jesus' death for us.

We are on the journey through Lent. Because Jesus went before the Judge for us and declared us guilt-free, we are blessed to be on the journey to eternal life. We will be with God forever — not in a courtroom, but in a setting of full joy forever.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we honor You as the perfect, all-knowing Judge. We rejoice that because You died for our sins, You do not declare us guilty, but free. We praise You this Lenten season and in all seasons. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Baptism, Fourth Part — What does such baptizing with water indicate? Where is this written?

WEEK 31: THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

JOY IN JESUS' JOURNEY: FACING PREJUDICE

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:5–26

TEXT: JOHN 4:9 / "The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?'"

SONG: LSB 571 / "God Loved the World, So That He Gave"; AGPS 108

LENTEN THEME VERSE: HEB. 12:2 / "Looking to Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

TOOLS TO JOY

Set up a "safe" prejudicial dialogue (perhaps between two adults): "I don't like your shoes; I don't like the way you fix your hair; I don't like the car you drive."

JOY TOGETHER

Have you ever heard "I don't like" statements? How do those statements make you feel? When we say or think "I don't like" about another person, we call those statements prejudice. We think that what we like is better than what someone else prefers. Our pride and prejudice are examples of our sinful nature, thoughts and words.

JOY IN THE WORD

Prejudice is not new. Our Scripture reading for today takes Jesus through a region called Samaria. For a variety of reasons, the Jews thought they were much better than the Samaritans. In Jesus' time, some groups had prejudice against women. Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman. In the eyes of many in Jesus' audience, He had done something terrible.

There is a difference between not liking vegetables or not liking a certain team and not liking someone for the way they look, the country they are from, or other comparisons we might make. God created us all! He created us as male or female, with different skin colors, different languages and other differences that show the variety and wonder of His creation. When we think we are better than another group, we are judging God's creation.

Jesus came to speak not only to Samaritans, women and many other types of people; Jesus came to die for all of them. In the Bible story, Jesus came to give not only plain water to the woman but also to give her the "water" of His Word, which would give her eternal life.

Jesus has given us the water of Baptism. All who are in God's baptized family are equal family members. We all have the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

As we journey through Lent and life, we will face prejudice. Some people may not like us because of where we came from or how we look. We know that God welcomes us as we are. Because He welcomes us as we are, we love and respect others.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You welcomed the Samaritan woman. In Your grace, You welcome and forgive each of us. Bless us as we welcome and love others in Your name. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Confession — What is Confession?
What sins should we confess?

JOY IN JESUS' JOURNEY: FACING DISABILITY

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 9:1–41 (or 1–17 if a shorter reading is preferred)

TEXT: JOHN 9:1 / “As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.”

SONG: LSB 702 / “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”; AGPS 175

LENTEN THEME VERSE: HEB. 12:2 / “Looking to Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.”

TOOLS TO JOY

Wheelchair, walker, walking cane, white cane for visually impaired, crutches, etc. Various items to assist someone who is physically impaired.

JOY TOGETHER

Do you recognize these items? Who might use them and why? Have you or a family member ever had to use one of these items? We thank God for these and other devices that have been developed for those who have difficulty with walking, seeing or other challenges. When we don't have the ability to walk, see, hear or respond in other ways, we use the term “disability.”

JOY IN THE WORD

Jesus, the all-powerful Son of God, saw all the needs of those who came to Him. The Bible tells us about Jesus healing the lame and helping the deaf to hear and the blind to see. Today's Scripture reading shares the story of a blind man who was brought to Jesus.

The disciples asked a difficult question of Jesus, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” The disciples thought that the man may have deserved to be blind because of his sin. Jesus' answer is important for all of us. The hurts and problems that we or others might have are not God's punishment for us. Since all of us are sinners, we deserve punishments much worse than being blind, lame or deaf. While God hates sin, He doesn't randomly hand out punishments. Not all disabilities or diseases are punishment from God. We don't know why this man was born blind, and Jesus never tells us. Instead, He says that this man's blindness would be to God's glory. In healing this man of His blindness, Jesus reveals who He is as the Creator of

all things and shows what He will do for us by His dying and rising. Jesus makes good out of this man's blindness, regardless of why he was born blind, and He will do the same for you.

Jesus heals the man of His blindness. The Good News for us is that the Jesus who performed the miracle went on to do an even greater miracle. By His death and resurrection, Jesus cured us from the blindness of our sin. The Holy Spirit opened our eyes to see Jesus as our Savior. No matter what our physical condition or disability, God will provide a perfect healing when we are with Him in eternity. The Bible tells us that because of Jesus' resurrection, we will rise with new and perfect bodies.

In our journeys, we will meet and see people with a variety of disabilities. Perhaps we have family members or neighbors who have some physical challenges. We have the privilege of reminding them of Jesus' love for everyone and the perfect healing that He will bring for each of us as we believe in Him.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for the wonders of Your creation. Thank You for our bodies that are fearfully and wonderfully made. Where we have weaknesses or wounds, because of our sins, because of the sin of others, or for reasons unknown to us, give us strength and healing. Use our weaknesses to Your glory and give us Your compassion for those who suffer with disabilities. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Confession — Which are these?

WEEK 33: FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

JOY IN JESUS' JOURNEY: FACING GRIEF

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 11:1-45

TEXT: JOHN 11:25-26 / "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."

SONG: LSB 425 or 426 / "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"; AGPS 266

LENTEN THEME VERSE: HEB. 12:2 / "Looking to Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

TOOLS TO JOY

A funeral pall.

JOY TOGETHER

Do you know what this is? Do you know when it's used? The funeral pall covers the casket as it is brought into the sanctuary for the funeral service. Explain the various symbols on the pall.

JOY IN THE WORD

Funerals are sad times. Some of you may have been to the funeral of a grandparent, neighbor or someone else you knew and loved.

In today's Scripture reading, Jesus goes to a funeral. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were friends of Jesus. Lazarus dies. Jesus goes not only to comfort Mary and Martha, but as the all-powerful Son of God, He performs a special miracle and shares an important message for all who grieve.

Death was not God's plan. When God created Adam and Eve, He created them to live forever. Only after the fall into sin do we hear the judgment "for you are dust and to dust you shall return" (GEN. 3:19). Adam and Eve and all their descendants would die.

Every time someone dies, we are reminded that death is a result of sin. The sadness (grief) we feel when someone we love dies reminds us of this sad and sinful world.

Jesus came with Good News to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus would die on the cross. Jesus' death paid the price for all our sins. Jesus rose again. Jesus' resurrection proves that He conquered not only His death but our death also. The baptismal promise is that we died with Jesus and rose with Him (ROMANS 6).

Jesus went to the grave of Lazarus and called him back to life. Lazarus came out of his grave. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we will come out of our graves also. The funeral pall is a reminder that even in death, we are covered by Jesus Christ, that His death and life are ours, and that we, too, will rise from the dead just as He is risen from the dead.

Like Mary, Martha and the disciples, we are certainly sad when someone we love dies. Because of Jesus' victory over death, we, like Lazarus, will rise again.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for being the resurrection and the life for Lazarus and for us. Give us comfort in our grief. Give us the sure hope of being with You and those who believe in You forever. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Office of the Keys — What is the Office of the Keys? Where is this written?

WEEK 34: PALM/PASSION SUNDAY

JOY IN JESUS' JOURNEY: FACING THE CROSS

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 26:1–27:66

TEXT: MATT. 26:1–27:66

SONG: LSB 443 / "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"; AGPS 121

LENTEN THEME VERSE: HEB. 12:2 / "Looking to Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

TOOLS TO JOY

Set up "Stations of the Cross." Perhaps older students could help select the stations and serve as leaders and readers for the various stations. In some contexts, various classrooms could arrange a setting and host the event. The stations could be set up in the sanctuary or other setting (gym, fellowship hall, etc.). Perhaps parents, congregation members and community also could be invited to visit the stations.

JOY TOGETHER

This is a special week for our church, school and families. This is Holy Week. We follow Jesus from the streets of Jerusalem to the cross of Calvary. We are going to journey with Jesus through the week. We will stop with Jesus at different "stations" and hear God's Word about what Jesus did at each station. As we follow Jesus, we remember that He made this journey for us. Jesus went to the cross to die for our sins. Let's journey with Him.

JOY IN THE WORD

(The number and complexity of stations will depend on time available, age of children and other local dynamics.) The Scripture sections may be read by children, teachers or others. Additional explanations of the stations may be shared by teachers, students or volunteers.

Station 1: Streets of Jerusalem (MATT. 21:1–11)

Station 2: Upper Room, Institution of Lord's Supper (MATT. 26:17–29)

Station 3: Garden of Gethsemane (MATT. 26:36–46)

Station 4: Betrayal and Arrest (MATT. 26:47–56)

Station 5: Jesus before Caiaphas (MATT. 26:57–69)

Station 6: Trial before Pilate (MATT. 27:11–31)

Station 7: Jesus is Crucified (MATT. 27:32–56)

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for Your journey to the cross for us. Thank You for sharing Your journey through Your Word. Bless us as we journey with You in worship this week. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Office of the Keys — What do you believe according to these words?

WEEK 35: EASTER

FULL OF JOY

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:1–18

TEXT: JOHN 20:18 / “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’ — and that he had said these things to her.”

SONG: LSB 475 / “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing”; AGPS 112

TOOLS TO JOY

A variety of leftover Easter decorations (from school, church or home) or treats.

JOY TOGETHER

How was your Easter celebration? Today I have some reminders of Easter gatherings. Our gatherings may have included colorful balloons, flowers (perhaps Easter lilies) and some extra Easter candy or treats. As with many celebrations, we enjoy the special food and atmosphere and then quickly pack it away and forget about it.

JOY IN THE WORD

We had Easter joy in our worship last Sunday and in our special celebrations at church and in our family. The Good News of Jesus' resurrection is that our joy is not quickly forgotten or packed away.

It had not been a joyful time for Jesus' disciples and friends following His Good Friday death on the cross. Jesus had been quickly buried in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. Some women who loved Jesus planned to go back on Sunday morning to finish the burial process. Many of the disciples were hiding because they thought Jesus' enemies would come to capture them. They thought they would never see Jesus again. Our Bible reading tells us about one of Jesus' followers, Mary Magdalene, who was at Jesus' tomb.

We can imagine Mary's sadness. Maybe some of us have been at funerals and were sad at the death of a loved one. Maybe some of us have gone to cemeteries with our family to see the graves of family members.

Jesus would not stay in the grave. Jesus had promised that He would rise again after three days. The promise came true. Jesus was alive. Jesus called Mary's name. She heard and saw Jesus. Mary was joyful! Mary's joy was immediately shared with Jesus' disciples. Soon all of Jesus' disciples would also see Jesus. For the rest of their lives, Mary and Jesus' disciples shared the joy of Jesus' resurrection. Mary, the disciples and all the others who saw Jesus alive (there were over 500 at one time!) are the reason we believe that Jesus rose from the dead and lives to be our Savior. Their joy is our joy.

We have lots of joys in our lives and in our schools. All the joys that we celebrate are because of the greatest joy of all — Jesus is alive! That's a joy we never pack away and never forget. It is a joy that we are excited to share.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for the joys of our Easter celebrations — decorations, family, vacation from school, etc. Thank You most of all for the joy of Your resurrection. Because You rose again, You bring us joy every day and eternally. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Luther's Easter hymn, “Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands,” LSB 458

FULL OF PEACE

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:19–31

TEXT: JOHN 20:19 / “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”

SONG: LSB 879 / “Stay with Us”; AGPS 221

Introduce Easter season and Easter fruits. Because Jesus is alive, we are given life through the Spirit to share the fruits of Jesus’ resurrection (GAL. 5:22–23). During the weeks of the Easter season, we will receive and review some of the fruits of the Spirit.

TOOLS TO JOY

Pictures (or words) of things and places that people may be afraid of: spiders, snakes, darkness, high places, etc.

JOY TOGETHER

What are you afraid of? I’ve shown you some common fears. (Another name for fear is “phobia.”) While we all have times of fear, there are some things and places that make people really scared.

JOY IN THE WORD

In today’s Bible reading, we find fearful disciples. While some of the disciples had seen an empty tomb and had heard from women at the tomb that Jesus was alive, they didn’t fully believe that the Jesus who had died on the cross and was buried in a tomb had risen from the dead. The disciples are hiding because they are afraid that the people who killed Jesus would come to arrest them for following Jesus.

Jesus comes to the disciples and greets them: “Peace be with you.” Jesus also shows them His hands and side, proving that it was really Him. Jesus’ resurrection was no longer a rumor. It was the truth. Jesus was really alive!

Sometimes we get scared. Some of us have fears of spiders, snakes, the dark and other things. Others of us get scared when our parents argue, when we hear weather warnings or the fire alarm, or when we are lost and alone. When we are afraid, we can remember Jesus’ words to His disciples, “Peace be with you.” Because Jesus is alive, He is with us always and everywhere. He never leaves us alone.

Our worst fear is that God will not love us or forgive us. In Baptism, Jesus gives us the blessing of His death and resurrection and the peace of the forgiveness of all our sins. In Sunday worship, the pastor says, “Peace be with you,” to all of us. He is reminding us that the risen Jesus is with us and gives us His peace.

Today we enjoy the fruit of Jesus’ peace.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, the disciples were blessed to hear Your Word of peace. Help us to know Your peace and to enjoy the fruit of that peace this season and always. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Sacrament of the Altar — What is the Sacrament of the Altar? Where is this written?

FULL OF LOVE

SCRIPTURE: 1 PETER 1:17–25

TEXT: 1 PETER 1:22 / “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.”

SONG: LSB 700 / “Love Divine, All Love Excelling”; AGPS 144

TOOLS TO JOY

Several glasses or other clear, similar-sized containers with varying levels of water or other liquids.

JOY TOGETHER

I have several glasses with liquids: empty, almost empty, half full and full. Let's imagine these containers show levels of love. Which glass best shows God's love for us?

JOY IN THE WORD

The full glass best shows God's love. The Bible tell us that “God is love” (1 JOHN 4:16). God, who is full of love, poured all His love into the world by sending Jesus as our Savior. Our Bible reading from 1 Peter shares that the precious blood of Jesus was poured from the cross onto the world.

Which glass best describes people when they don't believe in Jesus? (The empty glass.) We were born empty. Our parents and family poured their love into us, but their love couldn't make us love God or others.

Which glass best shows our love for our parents, brothers, sisters and friends? Sometimes, in our sinfulness and selfishness, we don't love others as we should. Our Bible reading tells us to “love one another earnestly.” We love with a pure, forgiven, full heart.

(Pour water into the full glass until it overflows.
Clean up the mess later.)

This is how God pours His love into us in Baptism. He fills us to overflowing. He continues to pour His love into us as we hear the Good News of Jesus' love for us. God's love not only fills our empty hearts; it overflows so that we can love others.

Today's Easter fruit is the fruit of love. The Holy Spirit fills us with the love of Jesus and blesses us to love others.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You are full of love. We rejoice that in Your resurrection we receive Your love. Send Your Spirit to fill us with the joy of loving others. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Sacrament of the Altar — What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?

FULL OF SELF-CONTROL

SCRIPTURE: 1 PETER 2:19–25

TEXT: 1 PETER 2:23 / "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."

SONG: LSB 499 / "Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest"; AGPS 225

TOOLS TO JOY

A stop sign.

JOY TOGETHER

When you are riding in a car with your parents and you come to this sign, what do they do? If you are riding a bicycle and you come to this sign, what do you do? We know what do to when we see this sign: we stop! Let's imagine some other situations where there might not be a sign for us to follow.

JOY IN THE WORD

If your mother says, "No snacks before supper," and you see a candy bar or cookie, what do you do? If your teacher says to stop talking in class, what do you do? If your teacher says not to look on another student's paper, what do you do? There is no sign that suddenly pops out and tells us to stop. We stop because we know we should obey our parents and teachers. We stop because we know it is the right response to God's commands. When we stop, we are showing self-control. This week's Easter "fruit" of the Spirit is self-control.

As the Holy Son of God, Jesus did everything perfectly for us. Our Bible reading from 1 Peter describes Jesus' self-control. During Jesus' last hours, He was lied about, mocked, beaten and finally nailed to the cross. Jesus experienced unimaginable pain. During all the punishment, Jesus never complained. Jesus never cursed those who hated Him and crucified Him. Our Bible reading said that He did not revile or threaten. Jesus showed self-control so that He might complete the payment for our salvation.

In our Bible reading, Peter writes, "For this you have been called." As followers of Jesus, we are called to live with self-control.

It can be hard to show self-control at times. If someone hurts us with words or actions, we want to hurt back. If there is something that we'd like to take or do, it's hard to stop. Our Old Adam (sinful nature) doesn't want to stop. But we are reborn children of God in Jesus. We have the life of the risen Jesus in us. We have the Spirit who works self-control in us.

What do you do when you see this sign? (Stop.) What do you do when you are tempted? (Stop.) You can do it because the Spirit of the risen Lord Jesus gives you the fruit of self-control to be obedient followers of Jesus.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we are thankful that You did not stop on the way to the cross. Because You also came out of the tomb alive, we have the fruit to stop those things that do not honor You. Bless us with the fruit of self-control to show our Easter joy. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Sacrament of the Altar — How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

FULL OF KINDNESS

SCRIPTURE: ACTS 6:1-9; 7:2A, 51-60

TEXT: ACTS 6:3 / "Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty."

SONG: LSB 698 / "May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill"; AGPS 174

TOOLS TO JOY

Perform surprise acts of kindness in the days before the chapel service or demonstrate some kind deeds for several students or teachers as they enter (hold door open, give a flower to a student or teacher, set up a comfortable chair for a student or teacher, etc.).

JOY TOGETHER

Did you notice any special actions on my part the past few days (or while you came into the chapel service)? Acts of kindness are appreciated and enjoyed. It's fun to do something kind and helpful for a classmate, neighbor or church member. To do something kind is part of our Easter response. Today we focus on kindness as a fruit of the Spirit.

JOY IN THE WORD

Life was especially hard for women in Jerusalem whose husbands had died. Because many of them could not find daily jobs and had families to take care of, the Church helped them. Our Bible reading for today shares that the disciples had helped the widows, but God wanted them to spend more time teaching and preaching — sharing that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The Church came up with a plan to find other caring helpers who could take care of the widows and do other acts of kindness. These special helpers were called deacons.

In our sinful nature, we only want to take care of ourselves. Jesus came as a kind helper. He helped the sick. He was the friend of everyone. Jesus did not come to earth to take care of Himself. Jesus did not

come to earth just to do nice things for everyone. Jesus came to take away our sins. Jesus' greatest act of kindness was dying for us.

Believing Jesus' death and resurrection, we share His love for others with our words and deeds. We do kind things for others.

The most important thing our church does is share the Word of God with the members of the church and continue to bring that Word to others who don't know Jesus. Our church also does things to help others. What are some acts of kindness in our church? (Share local charitable deeds: deliver meals, sew quilts, visit people in nursing homes, etc.) Doing "random acts of kindness" means surprising people with kind actions. Whom might you surprise with the fruit of kindness?

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You showed perfect kindness to children, to those who were hurt, and to everyone You met. We see Your kindness to us and the world in Your death on the cross. Give me the Holy Spirit so that I might share the Easter fruit of kindness. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Sacrament of the Altar — Who receives this Sacrament worthily?

FULL OF GENTLENESS

SCRIPTURE: 1 PETER 3:13–22

TEXT: 1 PETER 3:15–16 / “But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

SONG: LSB 725 / “Children of the Heavenly Father”; AGPS 80

TOOLS TO JOY

A soft blanket or stuffed animal.

JOY TOGETHER

Do any of you have a favorite blanket or stuffed animal? What is it about the blanket or animal that you like? We may appreciate that it was given to us as a special gift or that it is our favorite color. Many of us appreciate the softness or gentleness of the object we hold.

JOY IN THE WORD

This week's Easter fruit is gentleness. More important than a gentle stuffed animal or blanket are the gentle words and actions of others. The opposite of gentleness is harshness or roughness. It makes us feel sad and uncomfortable when someone speaks to us in a mean voice. It also makes us sad and uncomfortable when we experience someone being mean. Sometimes we may even be the ones talking harshly or doing mean things.

The Bible calls Jesus the “Lamb of God.” We picture lambs as soft and gentle. Jesus was gentle and kind. Even when others mocked and hurt Him, He was gentle. Jesus was more than a comforting Lamb. He was the Lamb who was sacrificed for us. Jesus, as the risen, victorious Lamb, continues to be the Gentle One to us. When we are sad, have our feelings hurt, or feel the roughness of others, we have Jesus' gentle words and presence to comfort us.

Jesus forgives our rudeness and roughness and gives us the Spirit of gentleness. Who needs the Spirit of gentleness? Is there a friend or classmate who needs a gentle smile or gentle word? Is there a neighbor who seems to be sad or mad who needs our gentle smile or a gentle deed?

We are blessed to be Jesus' gentle presence in the lives of others. We are blessed to receive and share the Easter fruit of gentleness.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for Your gentle forgiveness for my mean words and actions. Thank You for Your gentle presence in my life. Send Your Spirit of gentleness that I may be Your Easter fruit to others. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Table of Duties — What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors

FULL OF FAITHFULNESS

SCRIPTURE: 1 PETER 4:12–19; 5:6–11

TEXT: 1 PETER 4:19 / “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

SONG: LSB 735 / “Have No Fear, Little Flock”; AGPS 115

TOOLS TO JOY

Picture or video of the “Old Faithful” geyser.

JOY TOGETHER

Have any of you ever been to Yellowstone National Park? One of the more famous sites in the park is a geyser called “Old Faithful.” A geyser is a stream of water that shoots out of the ground. The water is heated beneath the earth’s surface, and when the pressure builds, it shoots skyward. This particular geyser goes off every 30–90 minutes. It has been faithful for as long as visitors have been to the area and records have been kept.

JOY IN THE WORD

This week’s Easter fruit is faithfulness. Do we know of something more faithful than “Old Faithful”? (Jesus.) The Bible tells us “Christ is faithful” (HEB. 3:6). God the Father promised to send His Son as our Savior, and He was faithful to that promise. Jesus was faithful in keeping all of God’s promises, even going to the cross for our unfaithfulness.

There are many times when we are unfaithful. We don’t obey God’s commandments. We don’t keep our promises. Because of Jesus’ faithfulness, we have His forgiveness. Now we are blessed to faithfully follow Him.

Sometimes it is difficult to be faithful to Jesus. Our Bible reading from 1 Peter describes the suffering that Peter and the followers of Jesus would experience

because of their witness of Jesus’ resurrection. When they were tempted to be unfaithful and to seek the easier role of being safe and comfortable, they would remember that Jesus was always faithful.

The Spirit fills us with faith and makes us faithful. We faithfully worship and listen to God’s Word. We are faithful as children in the home, as students in the classroom, as friends and in other places Jesus sends us. When it’s hard to be faithful, the Spirit helps us. Our reading says, “After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” God’s faithful followers will be with Him forever.

God has a promise for all who faithfully follow Him: “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (REV. 2:9). There’s something even more faithful than “Old Faithful”: God’s Word! Through that Word, we are fed the fruit of faithfulness.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for being faithful to Your Father’s plan for salvation. You were faithful all the way to the cross. Through Your Spirit, help me to receive and live Your fruit of faithfulness. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Table of Duties — Of Citizens

FULL OF THE SPIRIT

SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:1-21

TEXT: ACTS 2:4 / "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

SONG: LSB 496 / "Holy Spirit, Light Divine"; AGPS 120

TOOLS TO JOY

Symbols of the Holy Spirit visible in the sanctuary, worship setting or classroom. If they are not visible, bring in a dove and flame symbol.

JOY TOGETHER

Do you know whom these symbols remind us of? Why do they remind us of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit descended like a dove at Jesus' Baptism (MATT. 3:16). Tongues of fire appeared and rested on the disciples as the Spirit came into their gathering.

JOY IN THE WORD

We regularly begin our worship "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Today we celebrate the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Spirit.

While the Spirit was always present, today's Scripture reading describes the special appearance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised that after His ascension, He would send His Spirit. On Pentecost Sunday, 50 days after Jesus' resurrection and 10 days after Jesus' ascension, the Spirit comes dramatically, with wind and flames.

The Spirit's presence was more than a show. The Spirit came to share a message. Peter shares the message about Jesus, who had been crucified and who was now risen from the dead. Because of the Spirit's message, thousands of people repented and were baptized. The Spirit continued to fill Peter and the disciples as they went from Jerusalem into the world to share the Good News of Jesus.

Doves and flames are only reminders of the Spirit. Because the Third Person of the Trinity is a Spirit, we cannot see Him. The Spirit's presence and power are real and come to us in Baptism and through God's Word. When you were baptized, the pastor poured water on your head and blessed you with the words, "The almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given you the new birth of water and the Spirit and has forgiven you all your sins, strengthen you with His grace to life everlasting." The same Spirit that filled Peter and the apostles fills you. There are no flames over your head or doves flying in our school, but the Spirit is here!

During the weeks of the Easter season, we considered some of the fruits of the Spirit — love, joy, self-control, faithfulness, kindness, gentleness and peace. We see the Spirit's presence as we show the gifts God the Spirit has given us.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we celebrate the Holy Spirit's witness of You as the risen Lord and Savior. Thank You for sending the Spirit to the gathering in Jerusalem and for sending the same Spirit to and through us. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Luther's Pentecost hymn, "Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord," LSB 497

WEEK 43: HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY



JOY IN
THE NAME OF
THE FATHER,
SON AND
HOLY SPIRIT

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 28:16–20

TEXT: MATT. 28:19 / “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

SONG: LSB 504 / “Father Most Holy”; AGPS 94

TOOLS TO JOY

Symbols of the Trinity that may be displayed in the sanctuary, chapel area or school. If there are no visible symbols, bring some to the worship area: triangle, three interlocking circles, 3-leaf clover, etc.

JOY TOGETHER

I have another group of symbols to share with you today. Whom do these symbols represent? Why are we emphasizing these symbols today? We are celebrating the Trinity.

JOY IN THE WORD

Symbols help us picture something that we may not see or understand. Today we celebrate a truth of the Bible that we cannot understand: that God is both three and one at the same times. He is three Persons, but one God; one God, but three Persons; or, as we say, the Holy Trinity. Hard to understand? You bet it is! I don’t understand it, and I don’t expect any of you to understand it, either. But Jesus said it, and so we believe and confess it.

In today’s Bible reading, Jesus gathers with His disciples shortly before He would physically leave them and ascend to heaven. Jesus gives the disciples the power of His Word. He also gives the disciples an important assignment (commission). They are to make more disciples. They are to do that with Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is one of the three Persons of the Trinity. Each Person is God with Jesus. Together they are one God. Just like a symbol doesn’t tell us everything about what it represents, we cannot see or understand everything about the Trinity.

The Good News is that the commission of the disciples has reached us. The disciples went and baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Over many years and many witnesses, that message reached you. For many of us, God used our family to bring us to the waters of Baptism. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you became a child of God. Each Person of the Trinity is in you and directs you. The Father created you, Jesus died for you and the Holy Spirit made you God’s child.

Every time we begin the worship service, our chapel service or our school day in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are reminded of the truth of the Trinity. We are also reminded that the presence and power of the Trinity has reached each of us.

The Great Commission to share the Good News in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is still given to the Church today. We want all people to believe in the Trinity.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, we adore You with the Father and the Spirit. Thank You for the Trinity’s blessing and presence in Baptism. Bless us as we share Your name and being with others. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Luther’s Trinity hymn, “Triune God, Be Thou Our Stay” LSB 505

WEEK 44: SECOND SUNDAY OF PENTECOST

FULL OF COMPASSION

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 9:35–10:8

TEXT: MATT. 9:36 / "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

SONG: LSB 844 / "Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace"; AGPS 168

TOOLS TO JOY

Information about or illustration of "compassion" ministries: mercy ministries, Orphan Grain Train, Compassion International, disaster response, etc.

JOY TOGETHER

What does it mean to be compassionate? Whom do you think of when you think of compassion? I have some examples of compassion (share "TOOLS TO JOY").

JOY IN THE WORD

Jesus is the holy, almighty Son of God. He could have come to earth and lived in a castle. He could have chosen to be around only the most important people in the government and church. That was not God's plan, and that was not Jesus' mission. During this school year, we have learned many things about Jesus, and we have followed Jesus on His mission. As a baby, Jesus was laid in a manger. As a boy, He lived in the small town of Nazareth. He chose fishermen and common people to be His followers. Jesus did not separate Himself from the needs of people. Today's Bible reading tells us that Jesus saw the people as "harassed and helpless." When the diseased and disabled came to Jesus, He had compassion. Having compassion meant more than saying "that's too bad" or "I'm sorry for you." Jesus really felt bad for those who needed help, and He helped them with His healing words and touch.

Jesus' compassion saw the "harassed and helpless" people of His day and today. All people are helpless

because of their sin. The healing that Jesus offered for sinners was the healing power of His cross. He gave His life so that we would be cured from sin. Jesus rose again so that we would have the hope of heaven.

Because we have received Jesus' compassion, we are blessed to share His compassion with others. We have many compassionate people in our school and church. (Share some examples of compassion ministries of the school and congregation. Share some of the compassionate acts of students, teachers and others with an emphasis on being instruments of Jesus' compassion.)

Our reading for today tells of Jesus sending His disciples out as His representatives. Jesus sends us out, too. During this school year, you have been trained to be Jesus' representative in your family, neighborhood and other places. As we share Jesus this summer, we do so with His compassion.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, You are all compassion. Thank You for showing Your heart for sinners on the cross. Send the Pentecost Spirit to me so that I might be more compassionate to others in Your name. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Table of Duties — To Children

CLOSING SERVICE



GO
JOYFULLY!

SCRIPTURE: 1 THESS. 5:16–24

TEXT: 1 THESS. 5:16 / “Rejoice always.”

SONG: LSB 813 / “Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng”; AGPS 204

TOOLS TO JOY

Scenes of joy for the school year — perhaps a display of pictures, PowerPoint presentation or video. Perhaps several weeks before the closing service, older students (or faculty members or volunteers) could assemble the presentation.

JOY TOGETHER

Was there joy in our Lutheran school this year? You have just seen examples of joy in the classroom, on the playground, at athletic games, concerts, etc. We thank God for a joyful year.

JOY IN THE WORD

Has every school day and every school activity been joyful? Obviously not. There were days when students were sick. We lost some games. We made some mistakes in concerts. We didn't get perfect grades on every assignment. Sometimes our friends (or teachers and students) disappointed us. The Apostle Paul, whom God used to write these words in the Bible, had many times that were not joyful. Paul was beaten for being a follower of Jesus. He was shipwrecked and imprisoned. Paul experienced many pains and problems, yet he wrote, “Rejoice always.”

Paul's joy did not depend upon where he was or what kind of day he was having. Paul had the joy of Jesus. Paul knew that Jesus had died for His sins. He knew that Jesus had risen from the dead and that God would always be faithful to him. Paul knew that Jesus was coming back on the Last Day and that he and all believers would be with Jesus forever.

We have the same joys because we have the same Jesus. Jesus, who gave us the joy of His Word this school year, goes with us into our summer break. He goes with our graduates to the next phase of their education. He goes with school staff or families who may be moving to new places.

We can enjoy a victory for a few minutes; we can enjoy a friend's party for a few hours; we can even enjoy a school year for nine months. Most of our joys have an ending time. Paul says, “Rejoice always.” The joy of Jesus never goes away because the risen Jesus is here to stay.

When something joyous happens, we want to shout and share our joy with others. As we leave the school year with joy, we go to our many summer activities sharing the joy of Jesus with others — always.

JOY IN PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for all the joys of the school year. Thank You for the joy of teaching, learning, playing and worshiping together. Thank You, especially, for the joy of salvation. Send us out sharing Your joy with others. Amen.

FULLY LUTHERAN

Table of Duties — To Everyone



take
HEART
I HAVE OVERCOME
the world

837
644
414
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