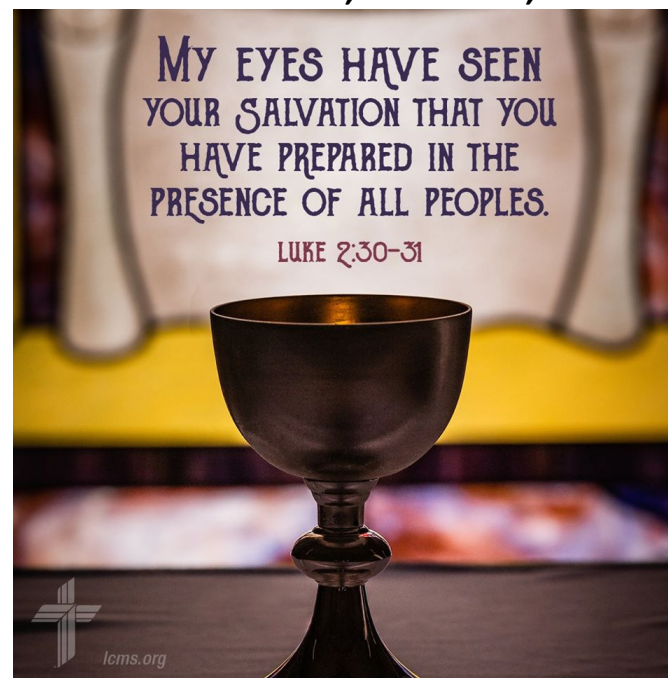


The Congregation at Prayer  
The Whole Story

**2025**

**A Daily Devotional  
St. Paul LCMS, Ida Grove, IA**



**Last Week of the Whole Story  
First Week of Christmas**

December 28, 2025-January 4, 2026

**Start Every Day**

*"In the Name of the Father, and + of the Son, and  
of the Holy Spirit. Amen"*

recite **APOSTLE'S CREED**

VERSE: Luke 2:29-32 ***"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."***

### **CATECHISM—Apostles' Creed—Third Article**

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

***What does this mean?*** I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

### **Sunday, December 28**

- Read **John 1:1-14**

ORIGEN: (John 1:1) I think that John's Gospel, which you have enjoined us to examine to the best of our



- 3 This is He whom seers in old time  
Chanted of with one accord,  
Whom the voices of the prophets  
Promised in their faithful word.  
Now He shines, the long-expected;  
Let creation praise its Lord  
Evermore and evermore.
- 4 O ye heights of heav'n, adore Him;  
Angel hosts, His praises sing.  
Pow'rs, dominions, bow before Him  
And extol our God and King.  
Let no tongue on earth be silent,  
Ev'ry voice in concert ring  
Evermore and evermore.
- D 5 Christ, to Thee, with God the Father,  
And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee  
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving  
And unending praises be,  
Honor, glory, and dominion,  
And eternal victory  
Evermore and evermore. Amen.

*Text: Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, 348–c. 413; (sts. 1–4): tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–66, alt.; (st. 5): tr. Henry W. Baker, 1821–77  
Text: Public domain*

ability, is the firstfruits of the Gospels. It speaks of him whose descent is traced and begins from him who is without a genealogy.... The greater and more perfect expressions concerning Jesus are reserved for the one who leaned on Jesus' breast. For none of the other Gospels manifested his divinity as fully as John when he presented him saying, "I am the light of the world," "I am the way and the truth and the life,"<sup>3</sup> "I am the resurrection," "I am the door,"<sup>5</sup> "I am the good shepherd." ... We might dare say then that the Gospels are the firstfruits of all Scripture but that the firstfruits of the Gospels is that according to John whose meaning no one can understand who has not leaned on Jesus' breast or received Mary from Jesus to be his mother also. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 1.21–23.<sup>1</sup>

### **Monday, December 29**

- Read **Matthew 2:13-23**

CHROMATIUS: (Matthew 2:16) In Bethlehem therefore all the babies were slain. These innocents who died then on Christ's behalf became the first martyrs of Christ. David refers to them when he says, "From the mouths of nursing babies you have perfected praise because of your enemies, that you might bring ruin to the enemy." ... For in this persecution even tiny infants and nursing babies

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<sup>1</sup> Elowsky, Joel C., ed. 2006. [John 1–10](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

were killed on Christ's behalf and attained to the consummate praise of martyrs. Meanwhile the wicked king Herod was destroyed, he who had usurped the realm to defend himself against the king of the heavens. Thus it is that those blessed babes have deservedly lasted beyond others. They were the first who were worthy to die on Christ's behalf. TRACTATE ON MATTHEW 6.2.<sup>2</sup>

### **Tuesday, December 30**

- Read **Genesis 46:1-7**

AMBROSE: (Genesis 46:4) Our God himself also exhorts that people with his own prophecy and promises them advancement in the faith, the fruit of his gift, for he says to them, "Joseph shall put his hand on your eyes." It was not that the holy patriarch was troubled as to who should close his eyes, although in the clear understanding of it a natural love is also being expressed. For we often desire to embrace those whom we love. How much more, when we are about to depart from this body, do we take delight in the last touch of our beloved children and find consolation in such a provision for our journey. Yet in a mystical sense we may take it to mean that afterward the Jewish people are going to know their God. For this is a mystery, that the true Joseph places his hands over the eyes of another, so that he who before did not see may

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<sup>2</sup> Simonetti, Manlio, ed. 2001. [Matthew 1–13](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

### **Luther's Morning Prayer**

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

### **Luther's Evening Prayer**

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

### **384 Of the Father's Love Begotten**

- 1 Of the Father's love begotten  
Ere the worlds began to be,  
He is Alpha and Omega,  
He the source, the ending He,  
Of the things that are, that have been,  
And that future years shall see  
Evermore and evermore.
- 2 Oh, that birth forever blessed,  
When the virgin, full of grace,  
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,  
Bore the Savior of our race,  
And the babe, the world's Redeemer,  
First revealed His sacred face  
Evermore and evermore.

treading and pressing of the winepress are also spoken of, since wine cannot be prepared for drinking in any other way unless the cluster of grapes is first trodden and pressed. Thus, we could not drink the blood of Christ unless Christ had first been trodden on and pressed, and unless he had first drunk the chalice of which he should also give believers to drink. LETTER 63.7.<sup>7</sup>

### **Sunday, December 28**

- Read **Isaiah 63:15-65:7**

### **End Every Day**

#### **Pray the *Collect for New Year's Day***

Eternal God, we commit to Your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending and commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. In the new year, abide among us with Your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

#### **Personal Prayers**

*pray* **LORD'S PRAYER**

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<sup>7</sup> Elliott, Mark W., ed. 2007. [Isaiah 40–66](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

now see. Come to the Gospel, read how the blind man was healed, when Jesus put his hand on him and took away his blindness. Indeed, Christ does not put his hand on those who are going to die but on those who are going to live or, if on those who are going to die, rightly so, because we first die in order that we may live again.<sup>38</sup> For we cannot see God unless we die to sin previously. ON JOSEPH 14.83.<sup>3</sup>

### **Wednesday, December 31 (New Year's Eve)**

- Read **1 Kings 8:1-13**

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: (1 Kings 8:1-2) The two weeks [of festivity] and the two solemn celebrations were accomplished by the people of the Lord with the greatest joy. The former prefigured the festivals of our church, which Christ began with the mystical dedication of his temple and the transferring of the flesh which he had assumed, to heaven; the latter foreshadowed the last day, the greatest of all solemn days, that will dawn for all saints after the resurrection of the flesh. And the distribution of the ministries and offices in the heavenly and everlasting temple will follow that day. ON THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS 8:1.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sheridan, Mark, ed. 2002. [Genesis 12–50](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>4</sup> Conti, Marco, and Gianluca Pilara, eds. 2008. [1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther](#).

### **Thursday, January 1, 2026 (Happy New Year!)**

- Read **Luke 2:21**

ORIGEN: So, when he died, we died with him, and when he rose, we rose with him. Likewise, we were also circumcised along with him. After his circumcision, we were cleansed by a solemn purification. Hence we have no need at all for a circumcision of the flesh. You should know that he was circumcised for our sake. Listen to Paul's clear proclamation. He says, "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ. And you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." Therefore his death, his resurrection and his circumcision took place for our sake. HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 14.1.<sup>5</sup>

### **Friday, January 2**

- Read **Luke 2:22-40**

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Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture.  
Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>5</sup> Just, Arthur A., ed. 2005. [Luke](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

JOHN OF DAMASCUS: (Luke 2:33-35) However, this blessed one, who had been found worthy of gifts surpassing nature, did at the time of the passion suffer the pangs which she had escaped at childbirth. When she saw him put to death as a criminal—the man she knew to be God when she gave birth to him—her heart was torn from maternal compassion and she was rent by her thoughts as by a sword. This is the meaning of "and a sword will pierce through your own soul." But her grief gave way to the joy of the resurrection, the resurrection which proclaimed him to be God who had died in the flesh. ORTHODOX FAITH 4.14.<sup>6</sup>

### **Saturday, January 3**

- Read **Isaiah 63:1-14**

CYPRIAN: (Isaiah 63:3) And does not also the Holy Spirit, speaking in Isaiah, testify the same thing concerning the passion of the Lord, saying, "Why are your vestments red and your garments as from treading the wine press full and well-trodden?" For can water make vestments red, or is it water that is trodden by the feet in the winepress or forced out by the press? The mention of wine is placed there, indeed, that in the wine the blood of the Lord may be known and that which was afterward manifested in the chalice of the Lord might be foretold by the prophets who announced it. The

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<sup>6</sup> Just, Arthur A., ed. 2005. [Luke](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.