

The Congregation at Prayer

I Love to Tell the Story

2025

A Daily Devotional

St. Paul LCMS, Ida Grove, IA



First Week after Epiphany

January 11-January 18, 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: Acts 2:38 *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Read/Chant Psalm 72

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, January 11

- Read **Romans 3:1-18**
- Secondary reading: **Ezekiel 33:1-20**

ORIGEN: (Romans 3:10) That no one has done good, not even one, is a hard saying and difficult to understand. How is it possible that no one, Jew or Greek, has ever done anything good? Are we supposed to believe that nobody has ever shown hospitality, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, delivered the innocent from the hands of the powerful or done anything similar? It does not

Among us find a dwelling
To comfort and sustain us.

5 To His disciples spoke the Lord,
 “Go out to ev’ry nation,
And bring to them the living Word
 And this My invitation:
Let ev’ryone abandon sin
 And come in true contrition
To be baptized and thereby win
 Full pardon and remission
And heav’ly bliss inherit.”

6 But woe to those who cast aside
 This grace so freely given;
They shall in sin and shame abide
 And to despair be driven.
For born in sin, their works must fail,
 Their striving saves them never;
Their pious acts do not avail,
 And they are lost forever,
Eternal death their portion.

7 All that the mortal eye beholds
 Is water as we pour it.
Before the eye of faith unfolds
 The pow’r of Jesus’ merit.
For here it sees the crimson flood
 To all our ills bring healing;
The wonders of His precious blood
 The love of God revealing,
Assuring His own pardon.

Text: Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. Elizabeth Quitmeyer, 1911-88,
alt.
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seem possible to me that Paul was intending to assert anything as incredible as that. I think that what he meant must be understood as follows. If someone lays the foundation for a house and puts up one or two walls or transports some building materials to the site, can he be said to have built the house, just because he has set to work on it? The man who will be said to have built the house is the one who has finished off each and every part of it. So I think that here the apostle is saying that no one has done good in the sense that no one has brought goodness to perfection and completion. If we ask ourselves who is truly good and who has done good perfectly, we shall find only him who said: “I am the good shepherd,” and again: “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.¹⁶¹

Monday, January 12

- Read **Romans 3:19-31**
- *Secondary Reading: Ezekiel 34:1-24*

ORIGEN: (Romans 3:28) It remains for us who are trying to affirm everything the apostle says, and to do so in the proper order, to inquire who is justified by faith alone, apart from works. If an example is required, I think it must suffice to mention the thief on the cross, who asked Christ to save him and was told: “Truly, this day you will be

¹ Bray, Gerald, ed. 1998. *Romans (Revised)*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

with me in paradise." ... A man is justified by faith. The works of the law can make no contribution to this. Where there is no faith which might justify the believer, even if there are works of the law these are not based on the foundation of faith. Even if they are good in themselves they cannot justify the one who does them, because faith is lacking, and faith is the mark of those who are justified by God.

COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.²

Tuesday, January 13

- Read **Romans 4:1-25**
- Secondary Reading: **Ezekiel 36:13-28**

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: (Romans 4:2) What can we say to those who insist that Abraham was justified by works because he was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac on the altar? Abraham was already an old man when God promised him that he would have a son and that his descendants would be as countless as the stars of the sky.¹³ Abraham piously believed that all things are possible with God and so exercised this faith. God reckoned him to be righteous on this account and gave Abraham a reward worthy of such a godly mind, viz., the forgiveness of his previous sins.... So even if Abraham was also justified by his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, this must be regarded as an evident

² Bray, Gerald, ed. 1998. *Romans (Revised)*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

407 To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord

- 1 To Jordan came the Christ, our Lord,
To do His Father's pleasure;
Baptized by John, the Father's Word
Was given us to treasure.
This heav'nly washing now shall be
A cleansing from transgression
And by His blood and agony
Release from death's oppression.
A new life now awaits us.
- 2 O hear and mark the message well,
For God Himself has spoken.
Let faith, not doubt, among us dwell
And so receive this token.
Our Lord here with His Word endows
Pure water, freely flowing.
God's Holy Spirit here avows
Our kinship while bestowing
The Baptism of His blessing.
- 3 These truths on Jordan's banks were shown
By mighty word and wonder.
The Father's voice from heav'n came down,
Which we do well to ponder:
"This man is My beloved Son,
In whom My heart has pleasure.
Him you must hear, and Him alone,
And trust in fullest measure
The word that He has spoken."
- 4 There stood the Son of God in love,
His grace to us extending;
The Holy Spirit like a dove
Upon the scene descending;
The triune God assuring us,
With promises compelling,
That in our Baptism He will thus

calling as Your children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Personal Prayers

pray LORD'S PRAYER

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.

demonstration of a faith which was already very strong. EXPLANATION OF THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS.³

Wednesday, January 14

- Read **Romans 5:1-21**
- *Secondary Reading: Ezekiel 36:33-37:14*

AMBROSIASTER: (Romans 5:6) If Christ gave himself up to death at the right time for those who were unbelievers and enemies of God ... how much more will he protect us with his help if we believe in him! He died for us in order to obtain life and glory for us. So if he died for his enemies, just think what he will do for his friends! COMMENTARY ON PAUL'S EPISTLES.⁴

Thursday, January 15

- Read **Romans 6:1-23**
- *Secondary Reading: Ezekiel 37:15-28*

AMBROSIASTER: (Romans 6:3) Paul says this so that we might know that once we have been baptized we should no longer sin, since when we are baptized we die with Christ. This is what it means to be baptized into his death. For there all our sins die, so that, renewed by the death we have cast off, we might be seen to rise as those who have

³ Bray, Gerald, ed. 1998. *Romans (Revised)*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ Bray, Gerald, ed. 1998. *Romans (Revised)*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

been born again to new life, so that just as Christ died to sin and rose again, so through baptism we might also have the hope of resurrection.

Therefore, baptism is the death of sin so that a new birth might follow, which, although the body remains, nevertheless renews us in our mind and buries all our old evil deeds. COMMENTARY ON PAUL'S EPISTLES.⁵

Friday, January 16

- Read **Romans 7:1-20**
- *Secondary Reading: Ezekiel 38:1-23*

CHRYSOSTOM: (Romans 7:20) Here Paul clears both the flesh and the soul from responsibility for sin, putting all the blame on the actions themselves. For if the soul does not want to sin it is cleared of guilt, and if it does not perform the action itself the body too is let off the hook. Everything may thus be blamed on the evil moral choice. The essence of the soul and body and that of choice are not the same, for the first two are God's works and the third is a motion from within ourselves which may go in whatever direction we choose to let it. Of course, willing is natural and God-given, but willing

in this way is from us and depends on our own mind. HOMILIES ON ROMANS 13.⁶

Saturday, January 17

- Read **Romans 7:21-8:17**
- *Secondary Reading: Ezekiel 39:1-10, 17-29*

AUGUSTINE: (Romans 8:13) I have quoted this passage so that I might make use of the apostle's words to deter your free will from evil and to exhort it to what is good. Nor should you on this account glory in man, i.e., in yourselves and not in the Lord. You are not living according to the flesh but are putting the deeds of the flesh to death by the Spirit. GRACE AND FREE WILL 11.23.⁷

Sunday, January 18

- Read **Romans 8:18-39**
- *Second Reading: Ezekiel 40:1-4, 43:1-12*

End Every Day

Pray the *Collect for Baptism of Our Lord*

Father in heaven, at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized in His name faithful in their

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