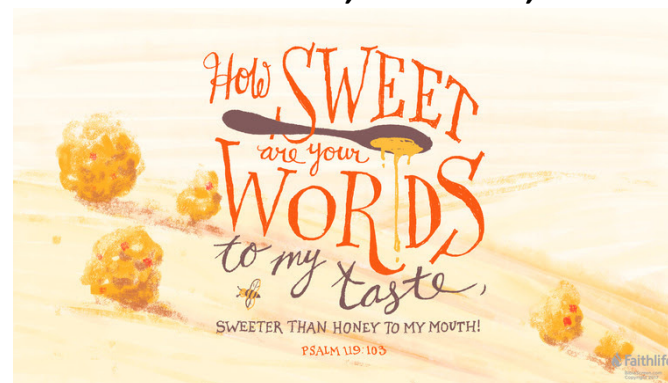




The Congregation at Prayer
The Whole Story

2025

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



Last Week of the Whole Story
Second Week of Christmas
January 4-January 11, 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: Matthew 7:7-8 ***"Ask, and it will be given
to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will
be opened to you. For everyone who asks
receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to
the one who knocks it will be opened."***

Read/Chant Psalm 119:97-104

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 4

- Read **Isaiah 63:15-65:7**
- *Secondary reading:* **Luke 2:41-52**

PSEUDO-CLEMENT OF ROME: (Isaiah 65:1) But by the effect of God's providence it happened that the recognition of this good being was distributed equally to the nations. So, they who had never heard talk of [God] and had never been instructed by the prophets recognized him, whereas those who were abandoned to thinking about everyday

D 7 O Christ, Redeemer virgin-born,
Let songs of praise Your name adorn,
Whom with the Father we adore
And Holy Spirit evermore.
Alleluia!

Text: Latin, c. 5th–10th cent.; tr. Gilbert E. Doan, 1930–2024
Text: © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship. Used by permission: LSB
Hymn License no. 110001895

403 O Savior of Our Fallen Race

- 1 O Savior of our fallen race,
O Brightness of the Father's face,
O Son who shared the Father's might
Before the world knew day or night,
Alleluia!
- 2 O Jesus, very Light of Light,
Our constant star in sin's deep night:
Now hear the prayers Your people pray
Throughout the world this holy day.
Alleluia!
- 3 Remember, Lord of life and grace,
How once, to save our fallen race,
You put our human vesture on
And came to us as Mary's son.
Alleluia!
- 4 Today, as year by year its light
Bathes all the world in radiance bright,
One precious truth outshines the sun:
Salvation comes from You alone.
Alleluia!
- 5 For from the Father's throne You came,
His banished children to reclaim;
And earth and sea and sky revere
The love of Him who sent You here.
Alleluia!
- 6 And we are jubilant today,
For You have washed our guilt away.
O hear the glad new song we sing
On this, the birthday of our King!
Alleluia!

things did not know him. Here is the prophecy accomplished among you who are here, longing to hear the doctrine of faith in him and of knowing the nature, circumstances and effects of his coming. For that is what was predicted by the prophets, that he had to be sought by those who had never heard a word about him. And that is why, seeing the prophetic words precisely realized among you, you are right to believe in him alone and have reason to wait for him and to inform yourself about him. In this way you do not wait for him only, but still, by faith you receive the inheritance of his kingdom as [Christ] said himself; each one becomes the servant of the one to whom he has submitted himself. RECOGNITIONS 5.12.1–4.¹

Monday, January 5

- Read **Isaiah 65:8-25**
- *Secondary Reading:* **Luke 3:1-20**

JEROME: (Isaiah 65:17) The new heavens and new earth are cause for rejoicing and for confessing the true God, because eternal amnesia follows on the former tribulations; this means that those who live therein will never be mindful of idols and previous errors but will pass from darkness into light for the enjoyment of eternal beatitude. For they will forget the former evils, not by having their memories destroyed but by receiving an inheritance of goods,

¹ Elliott, Mark W., ed. 2007. [*Isaiah 40–66*](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

in accordance with what is written: “On the day of good rewards, there will be no memory of evils,” and again: “an affliction of one hour destroys the memory of pleasures.”² Thus, to the extent that the former desires were born in tribulation, members of the new creation will never enjoy them in the wayward manner of the Epicureans. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 18.13.²

Tuesday, January 6

- Read **Isaiah 66:1-24**
- *Secondary Reading:* **Luke 3:21-38**

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: (Isaiah 66:11) This struggle is the correction of noble good deeds in them. For their sweat is profitable, and they have youth-like endurance in order to gain not an earthly possession but rather so that they become filled with graces from God and are satisfied in every desire. To these he makes this promise, “Like infants at the breast you will be filled by the breasts of consolation.” Since Isaiah has previously compared the figure of a woman with the new Zion, he remains in this way of speaking and compares this comfort with that of the breasts and milk of the Holy Spirit. For in the Song of Songs it says, “Your breasts are better than wine.” ... And Scripture calls Christ “glory,” for the psalmist says about him, “to prepare glory in our land.”⁷ This

² Elliott, Mark W., ed. 2007. [Isaiah 40–66](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

End Every Day

Pray the *Collect for Epiphany*

O God, by the leading of a star You made known Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles. Lead us, who know You by faith, to enjoy in heaven the fullness of Your divine presence; 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.

- Read **Romans 2:17-29**
- *Secondary Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-32*

PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: (Romans 2:17) “If the law were sufficient for justification, all who have received the law and are observing the outward acts of worship would be righteous.” But these are not righteous, so the law is not sufficient for justification. It must be diligently considered what Paul’s purpose was when he wrote this. He accuses the Jews in order that they may understand that there is need for a different benefit for justification. This is a serious rebuke of the arrogance in hypocrites, who are puffed up with confidence in their own righteousness. Such passages must be noted both in order that we may learn fear and that terrified minds may receive comfort. For such passages do much for both sides because they both curb carnal security and again raise up fear-filled minds according to the saying, “Let him that boasts, boast of the Lord.” COMMENTARY ON ROMANS (1540).⁷

Sunday, December 28

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

⁷ Adams, Gwenfair Walters, Timothy George, and Scott M. Manetsch, eds. 2019. [Romans 1–8: New Testament](#). Vol. VII. Reformation Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press.

entrance is the mystery of the economy in the flesh. Being God by nature, he became man through his incarnation and in such manner came into the world. Those feed on the precise message of faith concerning him, and they learn in what way the glory, that is, Christ came into the world. And directly connected to this, the divine prophet speaks of his clear appearance in the flesh, taking on Christ’s voice as he says, “I will descend on them as a river of peace, and as a spring I will wash over the glory of the nations.” COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 5.6.66.10–12.³

Wednesday, January 7

- Read **Romans 1:1-28**
- *Secondary Reading: Ezekiel 1:1-28*

AMBROSIASTER: (Romans 1:4) When Paul speaks about the Son of God he is pointing out that God is Father, and by adding the Spirit of holiness he indicates the mystery of the Trinity. For he who was incarnate, who obscured what he really was, was then predestined according to the Spirit of holiness to be manifested in power as the Son of God by rising from the dead, as it is written in Psalm 84: “Truth is risen from the earth.” For every ambiguity and hesitation was made firm and sure by his resurrection, just as the centurion, when he saw the wonders, confessed that the man placed

³ Elliott, Mark W., ed. 2007. [Isaiah 40–66](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

on the cross was the Son of God.⁸⁹ ... Note that Paul did not say “because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ” but “because of his resurrection from the dead,” because the resurrection of Christ led to the general resurrection. For this power and victory in Christ appears to be all the greater, in that a dead man could do the same things as he did when he was alive. By this fact he appeared to dissolve death, in order to redeem us. Thus Paul calls him our Lord. COMMENTARY ON PAUL’S EPISTLES.⁴

Thursday, January 8

- Read **Romans 1:18-32**
- *Secondary Reading:* **Ezekiel 2:1-3:11**

CHRYSOSTOM: (Romans 1:24) “God gave them up” means simply that he left them to their own concoctions. For as an army commander if forced to retreat abandons his deserting soldiers to the enemy, he does not thereby actively push them into the enemy camp but passively withdraws his own protection over them. In the same way, God left those who were not ready to receive what comes from him but were the first to desert him, even though he had fully done his part. After all, he set before them, as a form of teaching, the world. He gave them reason and an understanding capable of perceiving what they needed to understand. Yet the people of that time did not use

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

any of those things in order to obtain salvation, but rather they perverted what they had received into its opposite. What could God have done about this? Could he have forced them to do what was right? Yes, but that would not have made them virtuous. All he could do then was to leave them to their own devices, which is what he did, so that in that way, if in no other, having tried and discovered the things they lusted after, they might turn away from what was so shameful. HOMILIES ON ROMANS 3.⁵

Friday, January 9

- Read **Romans 2:1-16**
- *Secondary Reading:* **Ezekiel 3:12-27**

CHRYSOSTOM: (Romans 2:12) What benefit is it if, while listening each day, we neglect to practice what we hear? Hence I beseech you, let us be zealous in practicing those very deeds (by no other way, in fact, is it possible to be saved) so that we may also wash away our sins and be granted the Lord’s lovingkindness at his own hands, thanks to the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. HOMILIES ON GENESIS 47.18.⁶

Saturday, January 10

⁵ Bray, Gerald, ed. 1998. [*Romans \(Revised\)*](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁶ Bray, Gerald, ed. 1998. [*Romans \(Revised\)*](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.