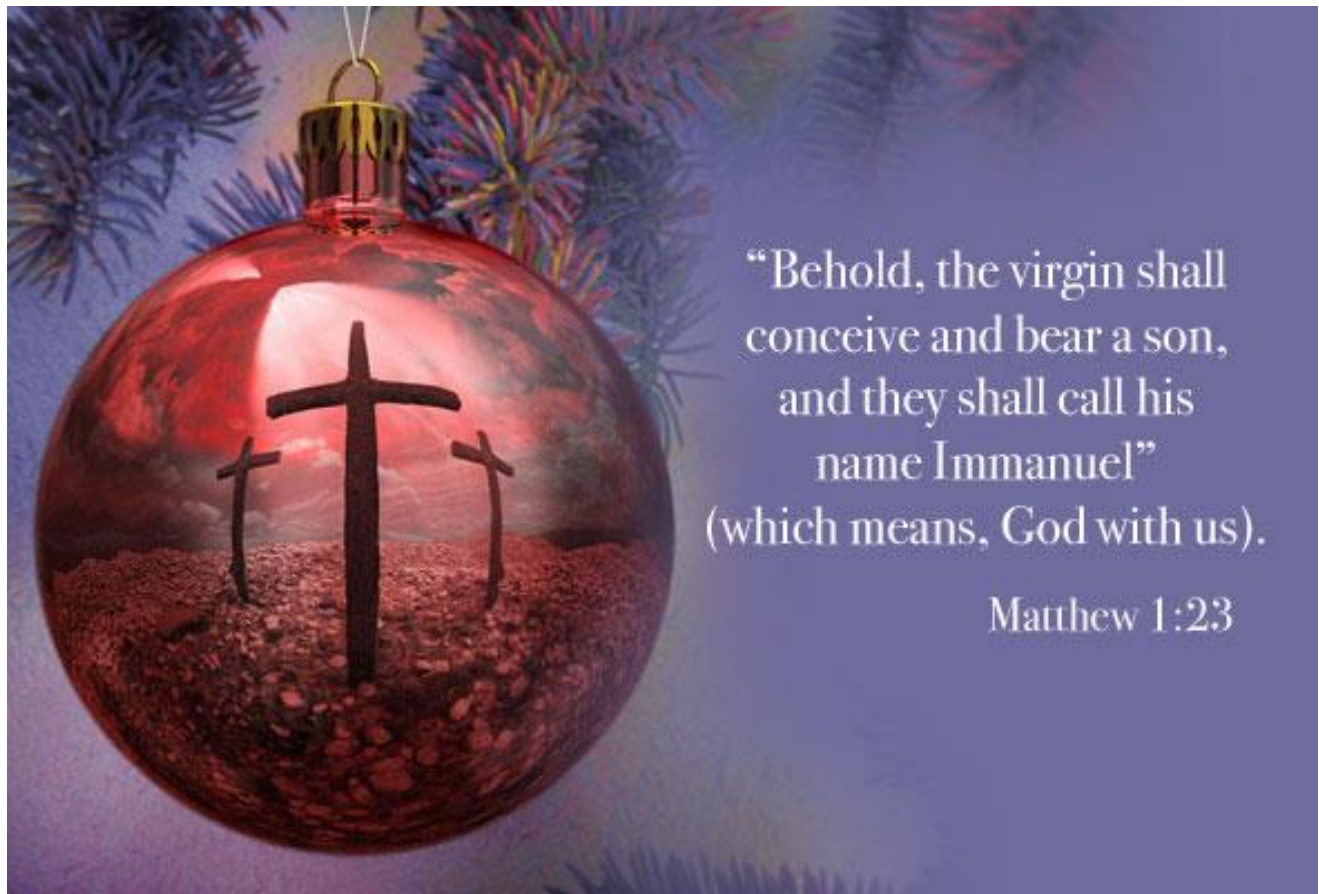


December 2020 Newsletter

Advent/Christmas Season



“Behold, the virgin shall
conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his
name Immanuel”
(which means, God with us).

Matthew 1:23

St. Peters Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

316 S. Main Ave. / P.O. Box 125 Wentworth, SD 57075-0125

Office Phone: 605-483-3129 Pastor's cell number: 507-221-1256

Church e-mail: stpeter@itctel.com Pastor's e-mail: adwelton@gmail.com

Website: www.stpeterswentworth.com

Saturday night service: 6:00 pm ~ Sunday morning service: 9:00 am

Bible study, Sunday school, youth group: 10:30 am

Our Mission Statement:

*“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.” Psalm 105:1*

Thursday, December 24 thru Sunday, January 3 I will be out of the office. Monday, January 4 I will be back in the office regular hours 8:30 am – 12:30 pm.

I wish each and every one of you a very Merry & blessed Christmas season and a Happy New Year!!!! ~ Melissa Reck, secretary ~



New One-Year Lectionary

You might notice a change in our readings this coming year. Some of you might even remember hearing these readings when you were children. The reason for the change is we are changing the readings series we are using for Sunday morning. A little history will help us understand why we

are changing and why there is even an option to change readings.

The readings we use in the church are not selected each week by the pastor. They have been selected by the church and set for every congregation to us. If you go to any LCMS church, you will hear the same readings used each week. There is a good chance the pastors will preach on the same text. We all get our readings out of a Lectionary. A Lectionary "is a schedule of readings from Holy Scripture for use in the weekly liturgy. In current use are both a historic, one-year lectionary, whose readings have been in use for centuries, and a more recently developed three-year lectionary. Use of a lectionary provides the congregation with the opportunity to hear carefully chosen sections from the entire Bible" (Liturgical Glossary by Dr. Paul Grime at CTSFW).

Think of the lectionary as a safeguard against a pastor just selecting his favorite Bible passages or topics to teach on. Without a lectionary, the pastor or a group out of each congregation would have to sit down and select Biblical text for each week to use in church. It would leave open for this group or pastor to subject the congregation to their whims and not to a good selection of Biblical text. So, the lectionary takes this task out of the hands of individual congregations and pastors and allows the church at large to help select these texts.

As we learned from Dr. Grime the church has been using a lectionary for centuries. We in the LCMS are doing nothing new by following along in this tradition and as we say above it is a good tradition to follow. The only change we have had over the centuries is the selection in which readings to us. In the early 1900s, there was the addition of the Old Testament text to the one-year lectionary. Then in the 1960s, the Roman Catholic church created the three-year lectionary readings. They did this to allow more of the Bible to be read in services. The LCMS picked the three-year lectionary up with the production of Lutheran Worship in 1982, but the LCMS expanded the readings a little. And finally, in 2006 with the Lutheran Service Book (LSB) the LCMS made an additional revision to the three-year lectionary by expanding the readings for a second time.

Which lectionary to use? The one-year or the three-year? There is no simple answer to this. St. Peters has currently been using the three-year lectionary. But the church historically used the one-year lectionary as we can find evidence even in Luther's preaching of these text being used and they come from before Luther's time. There is no wrong answer to this question. We can use either lectionary, the one-year, or the three-year, in our weekly liturgy.

The reason for switching to the one-year lectionary has to do with the readings selected. As we go through the year, we often hear the same theological point read week after week in the three-year lectionary. It can become both difficult to listen to and to preach and so with that a move to the one-year lectionary will help with some of this. The other reason is the church has used the one-year lectionary historically and will allow us to hear the same text our grandparents, and their grandparents before them heard along with many Christians throughout the history of the church.

The only thing you might notice is the way we name Sundays in the church year will change. There will be some strange names that come up during the time of Epiphany which will be hard to pronounce and remember. The thing to remember is the naming of the Sundays is an adiaphoron which is neither commanded nor forbidden in the Bible and is used simply to help us work through the church year in an orderly manner.

Our prayer is the change will be an edifying change for the whole congregation. That God would use this selection of readings in the one-year lectionary to create faith in all those who hear it and to strengthen the faith of all believers. Also, with it, we would learn more of what God has to teach us in His Word that our lives would be formed by the Word of God. I would ask for your prayers each week as I prepare to preach. This is no simple task and needs all the help I can get. Ask that God would give me the wisdom to understand His Word, guidance that I would preach clearly that all would come to know their sins and receive forgiveness for their sins, and lastly for faith, that I would faithfully preach the Word of God in truth and purity every week that God would use me.

Your Servant in Christ,
Pastor Welton

THE JESSE TREE IS THE JESUS TREE!

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.” (Isaiah 11:1)



It is Advent—a time to reflect, pray, and worship the Christ who came, who comes, and who will come again. Imagine the world some two thousand years ago in the weeks before the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. People were busy doing whatever it was that defined their lives at that moment. For some, it was struggling against hunger, fear, and desperation. For others, it was enjoying their wealth and ease. For yet others, it was simply dealing with the pressures of their lives. But

for all, the weeks we call “Advent” were just days and nights lived in darkness.

And indeed, it is a dark world. God had created the world to live in union with Him. He had breathed life into the father of our race, Adam, a creature of dust. He had formed Eve from the side of Adam and had joined the two together and to Himself. How bright the world must have been as Eden lived in harmony with the Creator.

But darkness came. Those created and loved by God rebelled against Him, bringing a darkness that permeated all creation. Death had entered through sin, and as the children of Adam filled the world, they took with them the darkness of that dreadful day in Eden when sin and death entered the world.

It was a world of darkness cut off from the source of all light, the Creator. Yet a light was breaking into the world. A young girl carried in her virgin womb a Son. This daughter of Eve was about to give birth to the One who would be the light of the world. This infant would reverse forever the horror of humanity’s fall into sin and death and darkness. This was the miracle of miracles: our human sister Mary became, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the mother of God, the bearer of the Savior of the world.

No human eye could perceive it that night. All that could be seen was a child. Yet this child would forever destroy the darkness, for He brought life into death, and His light was to be the light of the world.

Every force of Satan would seek to put that light out. Herod would attempt to destroy Him by killing every male infant. Scribes and Pharisees would seek to silence Him as He spoke words of life. Failing to silence Him, they would seek to kill Him. Some thirty-three years after the first Christmas, the Babe of Bethlehem would be nailed to a cross. But this is what He had come to do. The Advent story, including the culminating Christmas story, is about a baby who had been born to die—yet not just to die but to be placed in the utter darkness of a tomb and on Easter morning to burst forth from the tomb. When the child of Mary rose from the grave, the light that began at Bethlehem shone so brightly that no one can put it out.

Sermon series by Daniel Gard

Contributors: Timothy A. Appel, James Pierce, Carl Roth, Stephen Bongard, Matthew Clark, and Jeffery Blersch

Advent Mid-week Service Schedule
Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm

ADVENT 1 – December 2

Every earthly tree has a beginning—a moment of planting and life. The tree of Jesse is no different. There was a beginning as God created Adam from the dust and formed Eve from Adam. But sin and death came to that tree—a destruction that could only be reversed when the Creator of the tree would Himself become the Seed of new life in the midst of death.

Sermon: “Jesus, the Seed of Jesse’s Tree” Genesis 1:27; 3:8–15

Bible Study: Genesis 1:27; 3:8–15; Romans 5:12–21

ADVENT 2 – December 9

In a broken world, the word of the Lord had come to a man we know as Abraham. That which was promised at the fall (Genesis 3) was renewed through a promise that Abraham’s son Isaac would bear the promised Seed. But Abraham was put into a position where he had to trust the giver of the promise. Through Isaac would come Jesse, and through Jesse would come hope and joy and life.

Sermon: “Jesus, the Root of Jesse’s Tree” Genesis 22:1–18

Bible Study: Genesis 22:1–18; Hebrews 11:17–22

ADVENT 3 – December 15

In the darkest time for Israel, as the oppressive Roman Empire seemed to block all light, the tree of Jesse was not to be seen. Gone was the glory of David and Solomon. But the true life of that tree had come into the world—the Seed of the woman and the ultimate sacrifice for all of humanity. There stood the Life of Jesse’s tree before John the Baptist, and all righteousness was fulfilled.

Sermon: “Jesus, the Life of Jesse’s Tree” Matthew 3:13–17

Bible Study: Matthew 3:13–17; Romans 6:1–11

NATIVITY— December 23

Look and see. The Seed of the woman promised at Creation’s fall, the perfect sacrifice offered in place of Isaac, the true life of Jesse’s tree now has become flesh and dwells among us. Look not to the halls of earthly power and might but to the humility and powerlessness of the Babe of Bethlehem. There and there alone do we find the “great and mighty wonder” that makes all who believe the children of God.

Sermon: “Jesus, the Firstfruit of Jesse’s Tree” John 1:1–14

Bible Study: John 1:1–14



Due to COVID, St. Peters' Annual Community Christmas Caroling is cancelled



*If anyone has plans to donate a poinsettia,
please bring it to the church one week before
Christmas!*

~Altar Guild

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

Newsletter article – December 2020

Christmas is coming. It is a joyous time of feasting. The Church feasts upon the Word of God in sermon, song, and sacrament.

We hear the proclamation of the message of the angels: “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” (Luke 2:10-11). We mingle our voices with theirs as we sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased” (Luke 2:14)! We receive the proclaimed Savior, Christ the Lord, not wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in manger but wrapped in bread and wine placed into our mouths for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. We feast in great joy indeed because of this great blessing from our Lord and God.

God’s people in ancient Israel also feasted with great joy. The Lord showered His abundant blessing on His people. And He commanded them to feast upon it (Deuteronomy 16). The people were to go to the place appointed, where the Lord would make His name dwell, and give offerings, each man as he was able, according to the blessing of the Lord that He had given them (Deut. 16:10, 15, 17).

And there the Lord would bless them with joy as they feasted upon what the Lord had provided. They ate of the choice parts of their offerings. They enjoyed the company of all the people of God as they together heard His promises of blessing, sang of His bountiful goodness, and partook of what He gave.

We feast on the Word who became flesh to dwell among us, not just during Christmas but throughout all the year. We feast not just on the salvation He has wrought for us in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, but we feast also on all the temporal blessings that God gives out of His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. We enjoy the rich bounty that God provides, not only in Word and Sacrament, but also in house and home, property and income, family and friends.

Let us then, as did our brothers in the faith from ancient Israel, give as we are able, according to the blessing of the Lord our God that He has given us. Let us, like them, give generously of the first fruits of our income, which He gives, so that all may know and enjoy the salvation He gives and the joy we have in the Savior born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord.

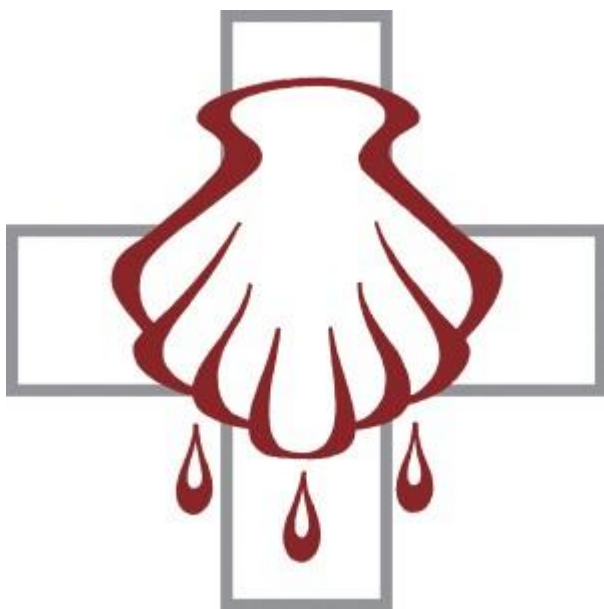


To read the Bible in one year:
SUGGESTED BIBLE READINGS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

DATE	FIRST READING	SECOND READING
December 1	Luke 1:46-55	Revelation 1-2
December 2	Psalm 1	Revelation 3-5
December 3	Psalm 2	Revelation 6-8
December 4	Psalm 3	Revelation 9-11
December 5	Psalm 4	Revelation 12-14
December 6	Psalm 5	Revelation 15-17
December 7	Psalm 6	Revelation 18-20
December 8	Psalm 7	Revelation 21-22
December 9	Psalm 8	Isaiah 1-3
December 10	Psalm 9	Isaiah 4-6
December 11	Psalm 10	Isaiah 7-9
December 12	Psalm 11	Isaiah 10-12
December 13	Psalm 12	Isaiah 13-15
December 14	Psalm 13	Isaiah 16-18
December 15	Psalm 14	Isaiah 19-21
December 16	Psalm 15	Isaiah 22-24
December 17	Psalm 16	Isaiah 25-27
December 18	Psalm 17	Isaiah 28-30
December 19	Psalm 18	Isaiah 31-33
December 20	Psalm 19	Isaiah 34-36
December 21	Psalm 20	Isaiah 37-39
December 22	Psalm 21	Isaiah 40-42
December 23	Psalm 22	Isaiah 43-45
December 24	Psalm 23	Isaiah 46-48
December 25	Psalm 24	Isaiah 49-51
December 26	Psalm 25	Isaiah 52-54
December 27	Psalm 26	Isaiah 55-57
December 28	Psalm 27	Isaiah 58-60
December 29	Psalm 28	Isaiah 61-63
December 30	Psalm 29	Isaiah 64-66
December 31	Luke 1:46-55	Mark 1

DECEMBER BAPTISMAL BIRTHDAYS

December 1, 1991 Mason Kenneth Lindholm 46002 233rd St. Wentworth, SD 57075
December 1, 1957 Diana Lee Maas 46332 231st St. Wentworth, SD 57075
December 2, 1979 Jason Norman Fischer 45358 230th St. Madison, SD 57042
December 2, 1979 Lori Beth Lindholm PO Box 51 Wentworth, SD 57075
December 2, 2009 Olerick Philip John Welton 420 NE 6th St. Madison, SD 57042
December 5, 2004 Rachel Rebekah Lindholm 46038 234th St. Wentworth, SD 57075
December 6, 1987 Adam Paul Limmer
December 8, 1953 Luanna Marie Shuck 600 East 2nd St. Colton, SD 57018
December 9, 1958 Darlene Christine Iverson c/o Terry Iverson 1338 5th St. Brookings, SD 57006
December 9, 2018 Rilynn Elizabeth Zillgitt PO Box 53 Wentworth, SD 57075
December 13, 1942 Dick DeJabet 934 E. Maplewood Dr. Madison, SD 57042
December 14, 2005 Ella Rose Fischer 45358 230th St. Madison, SD 57042
December 14, 2008 Olivia Rose Cacho PO Box 104 Wentworth, SD 57075
December 16, 1945 Kathleen Rae Dorow 46075 234th St. Wentworth, SD 57075
December 19, 2007 Grace Elizabeth Feige 45955 230th St. Wentworth, SD 57075
December 22, 1991 Matthew Stephen Tweet 24078 459th Ave. Chester, SD 57016
December 23, 1979 Brett Louis Schneider 45076 233rd St. Madison, SD 57042
December 24, 1997 Marryn Elise Brown 24131 465th Ave. Chester, SD 57016
December 26, 1954 Verl Uthe 5000 E. Grant Rd. Unit 71 Tucson, AZ 85712
December 27, 1953 Arla Jean Baumberger 46019 234th St. Wentworth, SD 57075
December 28, 1946 Terry Dean Feldmann 24056 462nd Ave. Chester, SD 57016



Happy Baptismal Birthday!
From your brothers and sisters
in Christ ☺

“Whoever believes and is baptized will
be saved” Mark 16:16a

DECEMBER WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Terry & Deb Reck December 1, 1972
Mr. & Mrs. Glenn & Gina DeGroot December 3, 2004
Mr. & Mrs. Kasey & Lacey Gehrels December 6, 2013
Mr. & Mrs. Dan & Bonnie Lindholm December 20, 1974



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Dec. 3, 2011 Addison Limmer	Dec. 20, 2006 Kaelie Lindholm
Dec. 4, 1936 Lyle Johnson	Dec. 22, 1980 Heidi Schneider
Dec. 5, 2007 Grace Feige	Dec. 22, 2005 Parker Gerry
Dec. 7, 2005 Ella Fischer	Dec. 25, 1942 Carrol Olson
Dec. 8, 1963 Loren Lindholm	Dec. 27, 1958 Marlys Arneson
Dec. 8, 1993 Mathew Vog	Dec. 27, 2004 Logan Reck
Dec. 13, 1942 Shirley Hess	Dec. 28, 1983 Rev. Adam Welton
Dec. 13, 1979 Brett Schneider	Dec. 29, 1998 Garret Olson
Dec. 15, 1997 Marnyn Brown	Dec. 30, 1962 Kimberly Hemmer
Dec. 16, 1953 Arla Baumberger	Dec. 30, 1986 Justin Baumberger
Dec. 16, 1954 Gale Maas	Dec. 31, 1969 Noel Wargham
Dec. 17, 1960 Kay Mendel	Dec. 31, 2015 Cade Fischer
Dec. 18, 1928 Darlene Iverson	
Dec. 18, 2004 Kadya Gehrels	



Jesus Gives Us Rest

Used with permission & written by Rev. Dr. Todd Jenks, [St. Paul Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod](#), Ames, Iowa.

Words are funny, aren't they? Many times, we don't mean literally what we are saying with the words we are using. For instance, have you ever said, "I'm so hungry, I could eat a horse"? Have you said it? But have you ever actually done it? When they were young, my sons loved it and laughed when I would say, "Time to hit the road!" On occasion, they would actually run outside to our street and hit the road with their fists.

So how about this one: "Sick and tired"! Have you ever said it? Have you ever felt it? Are you feeling sick and tired right now? When you are sick and tired of something, does that mean you are vomiting and have a fever from it? When you are sick and tired of something, you are not literally ill, but you are frustrated, worn, and weary by some ongoing issue or problem.

How many people at this very moment are sick and tired of the ongoing pandemic? How many people are sick and tired of the tension and dissension regarding every little decision, such as whether to wear a mask or not to wear one? How many people are sick and tired of waiting and waiting and waiting, wondering when this will ever end, when we can go back again to what life was before this pandemic came along to whack us?

Are you worn and weary from this ongoing pandemic? Have you gotten tired of hearing all the talk about coronavirus waves, when all you would rather think about this fall is the waves of the wondrous seashore or the lovely lakeshore? We are indeed sick and tired of the endless coronavirus. And the whole thing is far from over. Are you worn and weary from all of it?

In reality, you could ask that same query about any ongoing problem in your life. For all life's lingering problems, God gives us the answer—Jesus. Jesus is the one we can turn to, and need to turn to, with all of our problems. So, have you been turning to Jesus? Have you been finding your rest in Him?

Jesus proclaims, **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"** (Matthew 11:28). Jesus tells us further, **"I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"** (Matthew 11:29). Do you rest in Jesus? When you are weary of the world in which we live, do you find your rest in Jesus? What does this even mean?

Where do we find our rest? Too often, when we have stressors and "dis-stressors" in life, we turn to the substances of this life to try to relieve our stress. You all are very familiar, I'm sure, with the term "emotional eating"—maybe you even are personally familiar with the practice of emotional eating. You may likewise be familiar with the practice of emotional drinking, using that drink to cope when you're on the brink of tossing in the towel. God tells us we don't need substances to cope with life's problems and pressures. We need Jesus, the One in whom we can find true rest. Those substances will only give you a momentary assist as you address your problems, and generally they will give you other, greater problems to boot. Jesus will give you an eternal assist for all your problems, and relying on Him will make you even stronger than you were apart from Him.

Do you rest in Jesus? Will you rest in Jesus? Maybe you're familiar with the practice of resting when you are in court. The attorney may say, "I rest my case." Well, for every single case we encounter in life—every single problem or issue that we encounter in life—we can find rest in Jesus Christ. Jesus proclaims in our Gospel today, **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"** (Matthew 11:28).

I've told my congregation about the children's sermon by the pastor who was asking the kids a question about what lives in a tree and stores nuts and a kid replied, "Well, pastor, it sounds like a squirrel, but since the answer is usually Jesus, I'm going to go with that." Jesus is not always literally the answer to every question. For example, what do you use to change a tire? Jesus is, however, spiritually and in reality, the answer to every single problem in life.

We're facing a big problem right now as we keep going through this pandemic. How do we survive it? How do we keep from going crazy from the uncertainty? How do we handle the stress? Jesus is the answer. We can rest in Him, find our strength in Him. We can keep going through Him, endure and persevere through Him. We can find our rest in Jesus.

So, what does it mean to rest in Jesus? Well, there are two ways to rest. One way to rest is simply to take a break from all your labor. Certainly Jesus gives that to us. One way He does so is in worship, as we are strengthened through His Word and Sacrament. Remember on the seventh day after God's six days of work in His creation, God Himself rested, setting a pattern for us and showing to us the importance of rest. So, rest in Jesus truly means taking time to worship Jesus and to bask in the beauty of His Word.

But another way to rest is to be at peace and at ease knowing you've got what you need. As a student during my nine years of graduate school, four at seminary and five for my PhD, I would have fellow students who would not be at rest about an upcoming test. Quite often, it would be because they had not put in the time to study and to prepare properly. They were quite anxious to take that test. I was generally quite pumped to take that test. Why? I had studied hard, I had read and reread, I had taken many notes, I had inwardly digested what I had been learning. I was pumped up to go show what I learned, like an athlete who wants to compete to show what their training has done for them.

A weightlifter who has strength from working out doesn't get worked up about doing a pump. He knows he's got the muscle mass to do it, to lift that big unit. A runner who has trained for an event doesn't get stressed out about running a race. She knows she has the stamina to go the distance.

You have Jesus in you. He gives you His stamina, so you can go the distance. Through Him, you can do it! Remember what Paul proclaims in Philippians 4:13? **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"** Have you heard somebody say, "I don't know if I can do this, keep coping with this coronavirus?" Have you yourself felt like that or even said that? You CAN do it! Jesus is with you to sustain you and to give you rest in Him.

In Psalm 55:4-6, when David was enduring a truly trying time, David wrote, **"My heart is in anguish within me ... O that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest! I would flee far away to the desert."** Do you ever feel like that?

Do you wish you could fly away to get away from it all, so you could find rest from all the stress? That was David's hope, and sometimes it's ours. But it's not always the answer. For instance, during coronavirus you may not want to go away because traveling may increase your chances of catching the virus. And God's answer isn't always taking away our problems—it's giving us the One who gives us rest and strength to cope with our problems! Jesus proclaims, **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"** (Matthew 11:28). As we rest in Christ's Word, like we do in worship, Jesus gives us hope to cope and strength to endure and persevere.

Friends, we will get through this pandemic. We can survive and even thrive. And why? Will we get through this because we are such great people? No, although you truly are all wonderful people. Will we get through this because we as a nation are so great, the United States? No, although if you're like me, you do thank God for our country. Why will we get through this? How can I say this?

And how can I say it not just with hope, but with certainty and conviction? We will get through this because we have the Almighty God with us! He promises to never leave us, He promises to strengthen and sustain us. He gives us the wondrous Jesus, in whom we find rest, and in whom we find strength to cope with life's stress and distress.

Just as Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount encouraged us to look to the birds who do not worry about how their needs will be met but trust their Heavenly Father, we are called on to trust Him, too. Continuing with that theme of the birds, I'd like to share with you another Word from the Lord. **"Those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint"** (Isaiah 40:31).

Remember those words? Now I've heard different opinions on how well eagles actually soar and how much strength they actually have, but the point of the verse still applies. When you rest in Jesus, you will soar and have stamina. If you rest in your own strength, you will not.

Haven't we all been experiencing this during these days of the pandemic? When we have tried to cope with this craziness with the strength that is in each of us, we just can't muster the luster we need. But when we turn to Jesus and the strength He gives us, we not only can keep plugging along, we can be strong.

Think about what Jesus did when He gave His life on the cross. He paid the price for your sins with His own holy and precious blood. And after He did that, in essence He rested. He looked up to His Father in heaven and said, **"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."** His body was placed in the tomb, where He rested for three days in anticipation of His resurrection.

Jesus loves you and gave Himself for you. Surely He is with you to give you what you need to get through. For the times we've tried to find our rest and relief in places other than Him, He took our place under God's wrath and paid the price for all of that. He died and won forgiveness for you. After completing His work and resting in the earth, Jesus emerged to bring you new birth. When you are born again, you are made a new person in Him. A person who doesn't have to find rest in what this world offers, which really won't keep you rested but may just cause other problems instead. Through Christ, we can find true rest.

Remember the saying, "Everything I really need to know I learned in kindergarten"? Well, in many ways we could say, everything I need to know I learned from Moses, who wrote the first five books of the Bible and who—other than Jesus—the Scriptures call the greatest prophet. We think we have it bad. Think about Moses, leading those vast hordes of people for the Lord, facing off against ferocious Pharaoh, leading people who were finding their rest in things that were evil. Remember in the desert, when the people were feeling worn and weary by how long they had been wandering? Remember in the desert, when the people were looking back to how things had been prior to what they were enduring and were longing for those days to come back again? Remember in the desert, when the people were feeling a lack of rest, and so they tried to find their rest in something quite ludicrous, building a golden calf and worshiping it?

So, there was Moses, perturbed and plagued by all of that. He turned to the Lord in frustration and said to the Lord, "You have been telling me lead these people, but you have not let me know whom you will send with me." What was Moses saying? What you might say today as you face the coronavirus and feel all alone and outpowered? Moses was saying, "Lord, I can't take this, I can't do this, I can't make it on my own."

Remember what God said to Moses? Remember God's answer? The Lord replied, **"My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest"** (Exodus 33:14). Look carefully at your English translation and you should see that when God says, **"My Presence will go with you,"** the words "My" and "Presence" are both capitalized. This is a proper noun! This proper noun, a name for God Himself, is reminding us of the proper response to all of life's problems—to remember that God is with us. When we are in the desert of life, He will not desert us.

When I was in college, I took the class Desert Biology. We learned some wonderful things. I remember how much I enjoyed writing my research paper on the horned toad. One point I remember from that class is the climatological components of a desert. We often think of a desert as hot and dry, but in terms of climate, it is a place of vast variation of extreme conditions. It gets drastically hot in the day and can cool down dramatically at night. The average daytime high is 100, the average night-time low can be 25, so a difference of 75 degrees—quite extreme.

Moses was in a literal desert, experiencing those extremes. Amidst those extremes, when Moses thought he couldn't take it, God told Moses that he could make it. God told Moses that He, the Present God, was all that Moses needed. **"My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest"** (Exodus 33:14). Moses could rest in God and keep going. We are in a metaphorical desert,

experiencing extreme conditions at this moment, amidst the long-lasting pandemic. God tells us He is all we need. We can find our rest in Jesus. The proper response to life's extreme conditions? Listen, it's simply this: to find our rest in Jesus.

And since that's the proper response, this is also a proper place for me to say, "I rest my case!"