

# Daily Devotions



## Monday, 9/3/2018      Psalm 34:15-22

When we choose a god to depend on, we also want to be good, or, as the psalmist says, righteous. We are righteous when we are obedient, follow the rules and are nice. The righteous get praised for doing good. The righteous get God's help, and the righteous get rescued from their afflictions. It's a good god who can do that because it makes dealing with the day so much easier if our god saves us from all our daily headaches and griefs. But the new thing is that *Jesus* makes us righteous apart from us being obedient ourselves. This gift is a great relief, for it is never the case that we are always obedient. To trust in what we do to make us righteous is to choose ourselves and what we do as our god. So we really need Jesus' death and resurrection for us to make us good. *Forgiving Father, use Jesus as how you deal with us. Use his death and rising to make us look good to you. Help us to give Jesus to others to make them good. Amen.*

Timothy Hoyer, '09, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Lakewood, N.Y., and Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Falconer, N.Y.

## Tuesday, 9/4/2018      Ephesians 6:10-20

There is a lot to deal with in life. There is more than taxes and death, more than sickness or harassment at work, more than family struggles and having enough to eat. There are the "cosmic powers of this present darkness." There are the other gods that want to pull our faith away from Jesus, the other gods we choose to make our days feel good. Those other gods look so much better than someone crucified. Yet only Jesus offers resurrection, mercy, forgiveness and peace with God. To deal with life, Jesus, through our Spirit-given faith in his promises, gives us his goodness to put on like our daily clothes or to take up like the tools we use at work. We wear his gifts to overcome judgment, hate, greed, jealousy and quarrelsomeness. We wear his gifts to give others hope as we tell them, "Jesus makes you good." *Loving Father, as we deal with life, give us the tools of Jesus' mercy and forgiveness, that we may use them to give peace and hope and comfort to others. Amen.*

Timothy Hoyer, '09, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Lakewood, N.Y., and Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Falconer, N.Y.

## Wednesday, 9/5/2018      John 6:56-69

Life is difficult to deal with at times. We try, and we fail. We make mistakes and are judged. People blame and stay away even from those they love. Who said we have to judge? Who said we have to blame? But doesn't God's law demand such justice? Doesn't even death come as the final judgment on our lives? But judgment and death are not the final word. In our gospel reading we hear the good news that Jesus offers us his flesh and blood to eat. He offers us his death and resurrection. Yes, death is difficult, but when we die with Jesus, we also get his resurrection! Jesus promises us his life and forgiveness to get us beyond judgment and death. The Spirit of Jesus gives us new life and calls us each day to live by trusting in him. *Merciful Father, your mercy in Jesus defeats our death. Your mercy in Jesus is given to us in the bread and wine of his Supper. As we eat his body and drink his blood, give us his resurrection. Give us trust in him. Amen.*

Timothy Hoyer, '09, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Lakewood, N.Y., and Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Falconer, N.Y.

## Thursday, 9/6/2018      Psalm 15

Imagine if the greeters in your church employed this litmus test each Sunday upon your arrival. Did you speak truthfully this week? Did you avoid slandering and finger pointing at your neighbors? Did you keep all your promises, even when it hurt? Were all your dealings with money just and not for personal gain at someone else's expense? Psalm 15 tells us two things: one, that these expressions of neighbor-love, most of which turn on truthfulness and honesty, are deeply important for a people called to holiness; and, two, we're going to need a different way into God's presence than our own track record. Might you know a "high priest" (Hebrews 4:15) with the right qualifications for entry? *Lord Jesus, to be honest, I haven't dealt truthfully with my neighbors, and I don't belong on any holy hills unless you say that I do. Thank you for saying that I do by calling me your friend. Amen.*

Mark D. Williamson, '05, Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Dodgeville, Wis.

**Friday, 9/7/2018                      Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9**

God's commandments are like a fence carefully placed around a garden or vineyard. Through the gift of law, God gives us a boundary, both to protect the community God has planted and to contain it from getting out of control. Still today, you and the ones you gather with in God's name are a part of that "precious planting" (Isaiah 5), sown and nurtured by God's own loving hand. And God has not left you without instruction, a fence to help you live and flourish and bear good fruit. But notice also in these verses that the fence God has made is not so high that the neighbors can't see and admire what's going on. "See how near God is to them!" they exclaim. "See how just, wise, and discerning this people is!" You have been joined to a people whose deeper purpose is witness. Remember that as you honor the boundaries God has set for you and your disciple community, you do so ultimately so that others will be drawn to the goodness of the Gardener and desire to be grafted into the Vine. *God our gardener, thank you for giving us instruction to help us grow and prosper. Strengthen us to follow your teaching so that those around us might recognize that you are near. Amen.*  
Mark D. Williamson, '05, Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Dodgeville, Wis.

**Saturday, 9/8/2018 & Sunday, 9/9/2018 "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia!" ELW 369, verses 1-2**

*Christ the Lord is ris'n today; Alleluia!  
Christians, hasten on your way; Alleluia!  
offer praise with love replete, Alleluia!  
at the paschal victim's feet. Alleluia!*

*For the sheep the Lamb has bled, Alleluia!  
sinless in the sinner's stead. Alleluia!  
Christ the Lord is ris'n on high; Alleluia!  
now he lives, no more to die. Alleluia!*

*Christ, the victim undefiled, Alleluia!  
God and sinners reconciled, Alleluia!  
when contending death and life, Alleluia!  
met in strange and awesome strife. Alleluia!*

*Christians, on this holy day, Alleluia!  
all your grateful homage pay; Alleluia!  
Christ the Lord is ris'n on high; Alleluia!  
now he lives, no more to die. Alleluia!*

At the end of each day we tend to ask ourselves or one another how well we dealt with it: "How was your day?" Whenever something ends, we judge it. We decide and act depending on whether it was good or bad. If the TV show was bad, we don't watch it again. If the food was bad, we don't eat it again. That is how we deal with bad things. Jesus deals with us--we who are bad in that we trust other gods--in quite a different way. Jesus makes us good by declaring we are good, simply by his say-so. For he, the sinless one (the one who trusted God), died for sinners (those who don't trust God). What the law of God judges to be bad, Jesus died for. Jesus now lives as the Risen One on the side of those who are bad. We live by his promise that our trust in him is what makes us good in the eyes of God. *Loving Father, as Jesus makes us good, help us to deal with others with kindness, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and mercy. Amen.*

Timothy Hoyer, '09, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Lakewood, N.Y., and Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Falconer, N.Y.