

The Parish at Prayer and Study

The Third Week in Advent

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT (Gaudete)

Isaiah 40:1–11; 1 Corinthians 4:1–5; Matthew 11:2–11

John the Baptizer Prepares the Way for the Lord

The voice of the Baptizer cried out in the wilderness: “*Prepare the way of the Lord . . .*” (Isa. 40:1). John called the people to be made ready for the Messiah’s coming through repentance, for “*all flesh is grass*” (Isa. 40:6). Now He asks from prison, “*Are you the one who is to come . . .?*” (Matt. 11:2). Jesus’ works bear witness that He is. The sick are made well; the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Their iniquity is pardoned; they have received from the Lord’s hand double forgiveness for all their sins. The “*stewards of the mysteries of God*” (1 Cor. 4:1) still deliver Christ’s overflowing forgiveness to the poor in spirit, comforting God’s people with the word of the Gospel which stands forever. This Gospel produces rejoicing among all those who believe.

TWO-YEAR SCRIPTURE READING PLAN

Mon: Gen. 23:1-24:67 Tues: Gen. 25:1-26:35 Wed: Gen. 27:1-28:22
Thurs: Gen. 29:1-30:43 Fri: Gen. 31:1-33:20 Sat: Gen. 34:1-35:29

DAILY THEMES FOR PRAYER

(The following suggestions may be used to establish a pattern of daily and weekly prayer. Christians pray not only for themselves, but for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people, according to their needs. These daily suggestions are meant to assist the Christian to that end, and to be a supplement to the Christian’s other daily prayers)

- Sun: For the joy of the resurrection among us; for the fruit of faith nourished by the Word and Sacraments.
- Mon: For faith to live in the promise of Holy Baptism; for one’s calling and daily work; for the unemployed; for the salvation and well-being of our neighbors; for schools, colleges, and seminaries; for good government and for peace.
- Tue: For deliverance against temptation and evil; for the addicted and despairing, the tortured and oppressed; for those struggling with sin.
- Wed: For marriage and family, that husbands and wives, parents and children live in ordered harmony according to the Word of God; for parents who must raise children alone; for our communities and neighborhoods.
- Thur: For the Church and her pastors; for teachers, deaconesses, and other church workers; for missionaries and for all who serve the Church; for fruitful and salutary use of the blessed Sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood.
- Fri: For the preaching of the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the spread of His knowledge throughout the whole world; for the persecuted and oppressed; for the sick and dying (and all who have requested our prayers).
- Sat: For faithfulness to the end; for the renewal of those who are withering in the faith or have fallen away; for receptive hearts and minds to God’s Word on the Lord’s Day; for pastors and people as they prepare to administer and receive Christ’s Holy Gifts in the Divine Service.

COLLECT OF THE WEEK

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

HYMN OF THE WEEK: LSB 344 “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”

PSALM SCHEDULE

(From the “Table of Psalms for Daily Prayer” in Lutheran Service Book, p. 304. The Book of Psalms is the Bible’s hymnal/prayerbook. It behooves the Christian, therefore, to pray the Psalms daily, and the Table we will use throughout the year allows us to do so seasonally)

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
ADVENT							
<i>Morning</i>	24	122	33	50	18:1-20	102	90
<i>Evening</i>	25; 110	40; 67	85; 91	14; 16	126; 62	130; 16	80; 72

CATECHESIS FOR THE WEEK

The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

Bible Story: “The Rich Man and Lazarus” (Luke 16:19-31)

(NOTE: This is the Bible Story for the First-Third Commandments)

Excerpts from Dr. Luther’s Large Catechism on the Third Commandment

The Word of God is the true holy thing above all holy things. Indeed, it is the only one we Christians acknowledge and have . . . God’s Word is the treasure that sanctifies all things (377:91).

At whatever time God’s Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work are sanctified by it, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word which makes us all saints (377:92).

Therefore this commandment is violated not only by those who grossly misuse and desecrate the holy day, like those who in their greed or frivolity neglect to hear God’s Word or lie around in taverns dead drunk like swine, but also by that multitude of others who listen to God’s Word as they would to any other entertainment, who not only from force of habit go to hear preaching and depart again with as little knowledge of the Word and the end of the year as at the beginning (378:96).

Even though you know the Word perfectly and have already mastered everything, still you are daily under the dominion of the devil, who neither day nor night relaxes his effort to steal upon you unawares and to kindle in your heart unbelief and wicked thoughts against all these commandments. Therefore you must continually keep God's Word in your heart, on your lips, and in your ears. For where the heart stands idle and the Word is not heard, the devil breaks in and does his damage before we realize it. On the other hand, when we seriously ponder the Word, hear it, and put it to use, such is its power that it never departs without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, new pleasures, and a new spirit of devotion, and it constantly cleanses the heart and its meditations. For these words are not idle or dead, but effective and living (378-379:100-101).

How Christians Should Be Taught to Confess from the Third Commandment

My God has given me His Word that I might know Him and believe in Him. His Word makes me holy. It gives me eternal life and rest from all my enemies.

Questions for self-examination regarding the Third Commandment

Do I strive to make the day of rest holy? Do I care about holy living?

Do I use the Word of God and prayer to make my time, work, study, and life holy day by day? Am I lazy and bored with the Word of God? Have I any fear of God over this neglect?

Do I honor the Word of God highly by eagerly hearing it preached at the times that are appointed? Do I gladly learn it by heart and live in it? Do I despise the Word of God by neglect, paying no attention to it when it is preached, taught, or read?

Do I love my fellow Christians by being present with them in the divine liturgy to sustain them? Am I quick to make excuses for neglecting the divine liturgy because of what someone else has said or done, or to do other things I like more?

Do I complain about the worship, the pastor, or other people in the congregation? Do I learn the Word of God gladly so that I may teach it to others?

Prayer after self-examination

Lord God, heavenly Father, I confess that I have not obeyed Your Third Commandment as I ought. I have not held Your Word as sacred as I should have, but have far too often neglected to hear it rightly and study it diligently. I have often grown lax in worship and have been guilty of going through the motions during Divine Service. I have let my selfish desires get in the way of receiving the instruction and guidance You graciously offer me through Your Word. I deserve nothing but Your temporal and eternal wrath and punishment. But, I am sorry for my sins and believe in Your Son, Jesus Christ, my Lord, who fulfilled this, and all Your commandments, perfectly. For His sake, have mercy on me and forgive me all my sins. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit, that I may do better, and look not upon my failures, but upon the perfect holiness and righteousness of Your Son, in which I am clothed by faith; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Bible Verses for Meditation on the Third Commandment

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

John 17:17

Ps. 26:8; 27:4; 111:10; 119:105 2 Timothy 3:16

Isaiah 55:11

Romans 1:16

Luke 11:28

The Third Commandment in the Divine Liturgy

In the Divine Service the Sabbath is hallowed by the preaching and hearing of the Word of God:

- The prophets speak in the Old Testament Reading.
- The apostles speak in the Epistle.
- The Lord Jesus speaks in the Holy Gospel.
- The pastor preaches the Sermon “in the stead and by the command of Christ,” according to the faith of the church, which is founded upon the Word of the apostles and prophets of which Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20, see also Luke 24:25-27, 44-47).

BOOK OF CONCORD ONE-YEAR READING PLAN

Mon: Large Catechism—Part I: Ten Commandments 30-48

Tues: Large Catechism—Part I: Ten Commandments 49-60

Wed: Large Catechism—Part I: Ten Commandments 61-74

Thurs: Large Catechism—Part I: Ten Commandments 75-87

Fri: Large Catechism—Part I: Ten Commandments 88-102

LOOKING FORWARD: FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT (Rorate Coeli)

Deuteronomy 18:15–19; Philippians 4:4–7; John 1:19–28 (or Luke 1:39–56)

John the Baptizer Points Everyone to the Messiah

The coming of God in all His unveiled power at Mount Sinai was terrifying to the people of Israel. The thundering voice of the Lord puts sinners in fear of death (Deut. 18:15–19). God, therefore, raised up a prophet like Moses—the Messiah, the Christ. God came to His people veiled in human flesh. The skies poured down the Righteous One from heaven; the earth opened her womb and brought forth Salvation (Introit) through the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of the Lord (Luke 1:39–56). The fruit of her womb is the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the One whose sandal strap John was not worthy to loose (John 1:19–28). In Jesus we are delivered from fear and anxiety. In Him alone we have the peace of God which surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:4–7).

Collect of the Day

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day: 346 “When All the World Was Cursed”