INVOCATION

L: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 31

A: Surely, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior.

L: In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge;

G: deliver me in your righteousness.

L: Be my rock of refuge,

G: a strong fortress to save me.

L: Into your hands I commit my spirit;

G: redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth.

L: My times are in your hands;

G: save me in your unfailing love.

L: How great is your goodness,

G: which you have stored up for those who fear you.

L: You heard my cry for mercy

G: when I called to you for help.

A: Surely, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: O Lord, our God, govern the nations on earth and direct the affairs of this world so that your Church may worship you in peace and joy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READING & MEDITATION see next page

PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

A: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

VERSE OF THE DAY

A: Because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (Galatians 4:6)

BENEDICTION

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

A: Amen
READING AND MEDITATION:

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: The Holy Ministry preaches Christ in spite of persecution. Christ promises courage for his witnesses to testify even in the face of pain or persecution. The Prayer of the Day is one of the most ancient in the Church’s use. It seems to have been suggested by the disasters of the dying Western Empire. As Rome crumbled, the Church prayed for God’s governance that she might worship in peace and joy. Today Christ reminds us that even when that peace and joy are absent, he will give us the courage to continue to testify in his name.

As you study this week, seek to find the connecting theme in all the lessons by using Luther’s Four Big Barber Questions to ponder and discuss each individual reading:

1. What is God saying to me in this lesson?
2. For what does this lesson lead me to give thanks?
3. What sins does this lesson lead me to confess?
4. For what does this lesson lead me to pray?

THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 10:24-33

Jesus’ axiomatic statements are so obvious that they require no proof. Yet how surprised we are when we face persecution because of the Word! Perhaps we face physical persecution, or perhaps it is merely the way modern Christians are called intolerant, credulous, backward. But why should Christians be surprised or disappointed or angered about the persecutions they face? Look at the axiom! We slaves are not above our master who was persecuted first. So this should not lead to surprise and cannot lead to the cessation of our work as Gospel heralds. We know our master and the reality of who he actually is, not just the falsities his enemies promulgate. And οὖν, therefore, Μὴ φοβηθείτε αὐτούς—do not be afraid of them! Instead, shout and proclaim! Our enemies can only succeed in killing the body. Such a small thing compared to the fate that awaits them! The enemies of Christ have always been fearsome, whether in the days of the crumbling of the Roman Empire or during these latter days of American hegemony. That’s why Christ says it three times, Μὴ φοβηθήτε. In place of fear, find the courage of Christ to witness in the face of any persecution.

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: JEREMIAH 20:7-13

Persecution can come from any quarter. For Jeremiah, it came from within the visible church. Passhur, the chief officer of the temple, heard the message Jeremiah proclaimed and had him beaten and put into stocks. How telling that the first time the Bible calls Jeremiah by the title “prophet” is also the first time he faces bodily persecution! Proclaimers of the pure Word of God will always face persecution from without and within the visible church. But what could Jeremiah do? He could not hold in the Word because it was like a fire in his heart. He did his job and found his courage in the mighty warrior of the Lord and the knowledge that God will prevail. In the face of persecution, Jeremiah found courage, praise and joy.

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 5:12-15

This is the fourth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. When the first Adam listened to the Serpent’s lies, life and holiness disappeared from God’s perfect creation, and into the vacuum left behind rushed sin and death. By one act the first Adam ushered in an age where sin ruled and death reigned. Even the life of mortal man could only be called a life of death deferred. But the second Adam came! By his one epoch-changing act, the life of death deferred became a life of death destroyed. No wonder Satan tries to silence the proclaimers of this message with persecution!

My takeaways:

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON:

JEREMIAH 19:14—20:6

This lesson gives the preceding context of the First Lesson. Note the courage of Jeremiah, first in speaking the Word of the Lord that landed him in the stocks, and then speaking the subsequent Word of the Lord as soon as he is released from the stocks. To the man who had beaten him, Jeremiah proclaimed a message of doom and death by God’s hand. Pashhur could merely kill the body. So Jeremiah did not fear him, but placed his life in the hands of the God who numbered every hair on his
head. In those hands, Jeremiah found the courage to testify in the face of persecution, and even in the midst of it.

_My takeaways:_

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON:**

**ACTS 23:1-11**

St. Paul knew persecution well: he knew how to give it, and he knew how to take it. The man who once had been the Church’s worst nightmare had become by God’s amazing grace the Church’s great Apostle to the Gentiles. But the self-proclaimed chief of sinners, who once persecuted the Church, then endured a ministry filled with persecutions. The list of dangers and violence that Paul faced is lengthy. By the time we find Paul in this lesson he had faced persecutions many times. Yet, his Savior never forgot him, and his Savior never forgot to remind him of the courage he could have in Christ. He was going to Rome, and he would testify. Not even a martyr’s death would be able to stop the testimony Paul would make for Christ. What the Lord whispered in the dark, Paul shouted from the rooftop. And when he met his martyr’s death, it was only the door to eternity where his Savior acknowledged him before God the Father. Grant us that courage to testify, O Lord!

_My takeaways:_

_What major theme(s) connect(s) all the lessons?_